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SHE SEIZED A BROOM, AND BEGAN TO SWEEP.

DOLLIKINS AND THE MISER

BY

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BOSTON

D. LOTHROP COMPANY

WASHINGTON STREET OPPOSITE BROMFIELD

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DOLLIKINS AND THE MISER

CHAPTER I.

DOLLIKINS STARTS ON A MISSION, AND FORGETS IT.

DOLLIKINS LOOKED IN THE WINDOW.

ONE cold morning in March the great waves came tumbling in at Perkins's Bluff, a dreary-looking spot on the coast of Massachusetts, and then went back, rumbling and foaming, as if the northeast storm was not yet over; but the sun came out, and boldly declared that the storm was over, and he seemed to laugh to see the waves lash themselves after the whip of the wind had grown weary.

Puffing over the wet sand came a little body known along the shore as Widow Bradley's Dollikins.

"I knew you would give me good pickings this morning,"

she said, wagging her head confidentially at the waves over the great bundle of drift-wood that filled her arms. "You are doing first-rate; and I won't give the miser one stick — not one; and he's got the rheumatism, too!"

A great wave rolled in angrily.

"I don't care!" she continued, as if the sea had rebuked her. "He has ordered us out! Out of his old house, just for six miserable dollars! Who wouldn't despise him?"

The sea came in with another roar, more terrible than before.

"Humph!" she muttered. "Of course you despise him; everybody does!" and with a curling lip she trudged on.

The drift-wood was heavy, and she was obliged to stop many times before she came to the miser's little black house; but she was persevering, and after awhile she reached it, without throwing away one bit of her precious load.

She usually went to the back door with the wood, where she was sure to meet the miser, waiting for his share, which was often a generous one.

This time she had come home with the determination to give him not so much as one stick; but when she did not see him at the door, she looked in the window, and a change of mind showed itself in her bright eyes. Dropping her burden,

she selected some of the largest pieces and knocked at the miser's door.

She hardly waited for the surly "Come in!" but opened the door, and found the old man sitting in his arm-chair, by a feeble fire.

"Are you sick?" she asked anxiously.

"Yes," he returned. "Down ag'in with the rheumatiz."

She threw the wood down by the fireplace, and flew out of the door. In a moment she was back again, with an armful of dry sticks, which she piled upon the fire.

"Wasteful critter!" he grumbled.

"You are frozen up; that's what ails you!" she said, taking a low seat by the fire. Never before had she seen him so miserable. She looked about the dirty room with a compassionate air.

"You are awful wasteful!" But he rubbed his thin hands before the bright blaze. "Do ye want to roast me?"

"When I went out on the shore this morning, Mr. Perkins, it seemed to me just as if God said, 'There is one thing you can have enough of, Dollikins: that is wood.'"

"God don't like wasteful children," said the miser.

"He don't like stingy old folks, either," she said, throwing on another stick.

"Well, well, well," said the miser, stroking his rough chin, "we needn't be wastin' of it. You hev put wood enough on that fire to last all day."

"I am going to thaw you out, if it takes all the wood in the house, and all I can find on the shore, Mr. Perkins. I want you to get all thawed out, because I am going to ask you to give me something."

"Give ye something! What have I got to give ye?"

"I want the key to the barn."

"What for?"

"Mr. Perkins, you know just what I want to do."

"Ye ain't goin' to do it."

"Mr. Perkins!"

"I'll get out there myself 'fore the day's out."

"But I am worried about old Adam. When I went after the wood he kept calling to me, and when I came back I didn't hear a sound. I am afraid he has starved to death! You didn't give him any supper or any breakfast, did you?"

"A horse that ain't workin' don't need much feed."

"But just think of it! All that hay right over his head — and remember how he pulled last summer to get it in! Even Miss Bradley pitied him, and helped push the load. He is willing to work, but he must eat, whether he works or not."

"Ye may throw him down an armful of hay, though he don't need it."

"I thought you wouldn't let him starve!" she exclaimed joyfully. "Where's the key?"

"See here, ye ain't got it yet. Now listen: don't ye go nigh the grain-box, nor touch a finger on anything in the barn but just one armful of hay."

"Just so much meal or corn?" she said coaxingly, holding her hands together.

"Jest one armful of hay, and nothing else — 'less ye don't mind giving him a pail of water."

"One handful of meal in the water?"

"Little gals mustn't be obstinate. Here, take the key and get the hay; not more'n I said, neither."

She took the key and went to the barn.

"Poor old Adam! I am coming," she said, as she opened the door.

She went into the stall, and patted his bony sides.

"I will give you as much as ever I can for an armful," she said. "I'll heap it up to the top of my head; but I couldn't get you any meal, nor one kernel of corn."

Old Adam gave a reproachful neigh.

"We are having very poor dinners ourselves now, if that will

help you any. To think of your poor old ribs! And there's meal and corn in the barn, and I can't give you any! I wish I knew whether to give you the hay first, or the water. I think I'll give the hay, for a pailful of cold water must be dreadful for an empty stomach!"

She next raked a pile of hay near the stall — much more, probably, than the miser's idea of an armful — and when the pile was as high as her shoulder, she reached her arm over it and grasped as much as she could. When she started to go into the stall she lost so much of it she was dissatisfied, and tried it again.

Adam neighed impatiently.

"The longer you wait the more you'll get," she said, trying again to grasp the pile. "There! that is the best I can do for you."

While he ate the hay she went for the pail of water. When she came back with it, she was obliged to set the pail down close beside the meal-chest a moment, to rest her arms before she entered the stall again.

She lifted the cover. "Old miser!" she said, taking up a handful of the golden heap within, and letting it slide slowly through her fingers. She then held a fistful over the pail, but did not drop a grain.

"No! no!" she said hastily, throwing it back into the chest. "I won't do it! I remember when I climbed in the window and gave old Adam so much corn that he almost died. Mr. Perkins said I stole that corn, and I did."

She had gone back to the horse, and found him contented with the hay. She now went for the water.

There was the pail just where she had left it, but the water was no longer clear, and on the floor was a generous sprinkling of meal, as if some one with a free, careless hand, had hastily thrown a quantity of meal into the pail.

Dollikins's imagination was a lively one. She was always thinking that something wonderful ought to, or might, happen; but when something did happen she began to try to explain it to herself in the most commonplace way.

Could the miser have done it? Sometimes he did joke a little. She found a stick and stirred up the meal from the bottom of the pail. There must have been two quarts, she thought. No, it was never the miser. It could not have been her mother, for she would never have done herself what she had forbidden Dollikins to do. Her sister never went near the barn, nor thought much about old Adam, any way.

Yet Dollikins felt it must be some one in the house, and

she determined to keep very still and find out who it was. She could not put the meal back; the only thing was to feed the horse and wait and see who had dared to take the miser's meal. When she gave back the key the miser said, "Did ye do just as I said?"

"I gave him the biggest armful I could possibly get up."

"Leave ye alone for that! Ye didn't give him any meal nor corn?"

How should she answer?

"I did, and I didn't," she said, laughing.

"If ye did, ye stole!" he said shortly.

"'Pon your word now, Mr. Perkins, you haven't been out to the barn since I left this room?"

"Couldn't get to the door."

"The best way is to tell you all about it, and if you say I stole I'll pay for the meal," and in a few words she told him all that had happened.

A look of terror such as she had never seen, came into his face, and he seized her by the arm so roughly that she was frightened.

"Say that ye threw that meal in there yerself!" he said in a low voice.

"But I didn't."

"Come! come!" he said gently. "Own up, like a nice gal! I won't scold ye, nor make ye pay for it."

"Didn't I tell you when I climbed in the window and gave him all that corn and almost killed him? I can't tell you I did it if I didn't, can I?"

"Never mind!" he said suddenly. "Don't mention it to any one. No need scaring your mother."

"That wouldn't scare her. I didn't mean to tell you, or anybody, but find out myself who did it; but you asked right out, and I had to tell."

"Dollikins, it was a robber, and ye've locked him up in the barn!"

"I don't believe it was a robber at all, Mr. Perkins, but somebody that likes a joke. Somebody that knows you, and knows you are — that you" —

"Well, well," he said impatiently.

"That you are stingy, and did it for a joke on me."

"That's it, like enough," he said nervously, "and we won't say nothing about it. Now run home."

"I came in to tell you something very particular."

"Why don't ye tell it?"

"I don't know how. I — did you ever feel as if you would like to do some great good, Mr. Perkins?"

"Eh?" said the miser, with a grim smile.

She repeated her question.

"No; I ain't that kind."

"Marianna read me a story New Year's Day about a woman who did a great deal of good, and she was poor, too. This woman said that everybody could find a mission."

"Stories ain't true, and reading of 'em don't help ye pay the rent, Mistress Dollikins."

Dollikins's face became hot, and in spite of her efforts, tears came to her eyes.

"No, I won't get provoked, no matter what you say, and I will tell you that I have made up my mind to take you for my mission. I told Marianna so this morning. I will tell you just what I told her; I said that it wasn't the kind of a mission I should like, but it was better than nothing. Just after I said this to Marianna, you saw mother, and told her what you did about the rent; and I went out after wood, and I said I would never give you another stick, or speak to you again, but" —

"Land! how ye do jabber! Don't take it that I'm following ye very close."

"I only want you to know that I am going to begin to-day. Now — this very minute!"

"Begin what?"

"Why, my mission. I think I'll sweep first."

"Ye ain't going to sweep here."

"Why not?"

"The dust will make me cough. Ain't it bad enough to have rheumatiz without coughing?"

She seized an old broom and began to sweep the opposite side of the room. At first she swept gently, but as she caught sight of a corner well-rounded by the accumulation of dust, she became energetic, and a little cloud of fine dry sand-like particles floated over toward the old man.

"There! I'm much obliged; you better run home now."

"I forgot, and threw up the broom; I won't do it again; but there is so much dirt in the corners, and this is such an old stub of a broom! I'll go get ours."

"No, I don't want ye to come back!" But she was out of hearing.

The miser's head sank upon his breast, and he whispered softly, "Yes; he has come back! Yet it can't be; but it's his tricks — it's his tricks!"

Dollikins stopped at the back door to pick up the wood, and went into the kitchen.

"I brought home a good load," she said to her mother, "but I stopped and gave a good deal to the miser."

She raised her eyes to her mother. "What is the matter?" she exclaimed; "you have been leaning on the Bradley urn again! Tell me, has he said anything more?" jerking her thumb over her shoulder towards the miser's side of the house.

The widow shook her head with a sad smile.

In the widow's small parlor hung a picture of a woman leaning on an urn under a willow-tree. This picture was sacred to the memory of Dollikins's great-grandmother; and when any members of the family appeared downcast, or showed signs of tears, Dollikins always said they had been leaning on the Bradley urn.

"Where's Marianna?" asked Dollikins, taking the broom.

"Come here a minute," said the widow, in a low tone, drawing Dollikins close to her; "there, let the broom go, dear, and tell me how much could you sacrifice for Marianna?"

The broom fell to the floor, and Dollikins's hand came out dramatically.

"Did I wear a white petticoat all last summer? Don't I always pick up the wood, and clean the fish? Don't I want Miss Bradley to dress up, and have pretty hands, and be a lady? Feel of that!" She held out a small brown hand with a palm almost as hard as a sailor's.

"That is not what I mean, dearie; would you be willing to let Marianna go away, and only see her once in a long time?"

"No," said Dollikins shortly, "I wouldn't."

After a pause she murmured, with a curling lip, "Uncle John, I suppose."

"Yes, dear; he has written her."

"She wrote him first, I suppose."

"Yes; about the rent."

"Oh! here is Miss Bradley;" for at this moment Marianna came into the room.

She was a tall girl, with eyes as blue as the sea. There was a dainty look about everything she wore, even to the cotton kerchief that was crossed on her bosom. She sat down in a rocking-chair beside Dollikins's pile of wood.

"What a stout back you must have, Dolly," she said, after she had gazed at the wood awhile.

"And a stout heart," added the mother.

The owner of the stout back and stout heart cast a look of scorn upon her sister and began to gather up the wood.

"Do rest a minute," said Marianna gently.

"Anybody that can beg, can rest," said Dollikins, piling the wood on her arm; but suddenly she dropped it, and turned toward her sister. "You have written a begging letter to

Uncle John, Miss Bradley!" Whenever Dollikins thought her sister particularly proud, well-dressed, or ungrateful, she always called her Miss Bradley.

"You know," continued Dollikins, "every time you write to him what he writes to you. You know that he has been bound to get you away to live with him for years, and years, and years! Every year when we get the poorest they write and offer to take you; as if you were a big dog that was eating us out of house and home.

"I suppose the letter was just like all the others: 'You know we are alone, your aunt and I, with plenty of money, and no children.' If they are alone, let them stay alone! I don't wonder the Lord didn't want Aunt Maria to people the earth: she looks just like a rag-doll with good clothes on; and because we are poor she thinks she has the right to say anything to us!"

"Your Uncle John was kind to me after your father died, Dollikins," said the mother.

"Very kind! He paid a few bills, and then expected you to give him your best-looking child!" cried Dollikins; "and because you wouldn't, he didn't visit us for years."

"Uncle John would rather have had you," said Marianna.

"But Aunt Maria said I wasn't a s'metrical child. When

you write again, Miss Bradley, just tell Aunt Maria that I have turned out more s'metrical than any of her children."

Marianna smiled faintly, but tears stood in her eyes. The widow went out, and left them alone.

For a few minutes Dollikins threw wood into the little fireplace until there seemed to be danger of setting the chimney on fire; then she turned and said, "Do you remember New Year's day, when we were both going to be so good, and have missions?" She laughed a sarcastic little laugh.

"You have been good, Dolly; you are always good and unselfish."

"Humph!" grunted Dollikins scornfully, throwing on more wood.

"Don't waste it," said Marianna gently.

"Don't you worry, Miss Bradley," was the curt retort. "You are going where they have stoves, and servants."

In her heart she did not believe her sister would go away. Almost every year her uncle had written for her to come, but her mother had said, "We can live."

"Why can't we live now," thought Dollikins. "Mother can keep on sewing, and I get the wood, and the miser gives me a fish for every fish I clean for him. Of course we can live — Miss Bradley wants to go!" But she had to admit that

Miss Bradley did not look very happy, as she sat there, and Dollikins's heart smote her a little as she noticed how white her cheeks had grown.

After awhile Marianna roused herself and said, "Mother worked too hard last winter, Dolly, and she has not been well this winter. If I go away it will be easier for her. Of course I need not say that I don't want to go away. Think of leaving mother to live with Aunt Maria!"

"Are you really thinking anything about going?" said Dollikins stiffly.

"I must! I must! There is a reason why I ought to go, but — I cannot tell it."

"Tell it!" said Dollikins.

"One reason, if I go there it will please Uncle John and Aunt Maria, and they will do something for mother — she can't work as hard as she has been working; it will kill her."

"Is that the reason you can't tell?"

"N–no."

"What is it?"

"I am sure it would hurt you to tell you."

"A good deal you care about hurting me!"

"I don't blame you one bit for saying that. I have been awfully selfish to you; I have let you do the hard and dirty

work, and I have done what I liked best. I have always thought that you did not care as much to be clean as I did, and I thought I ought to have better shoes than you, because you were always running into the water."

"I don't care for that; but I didn't believe you would ever want to go away and leave us because we were poor!"

"Dollikins, never say that!" cried Marianna. "It is wrong for me to stay. It is right that mother should work for you, but not for me."

"You are not so very old," said Dollikins, startled at her sister's pale and troubled face.

"No, no! it is not that," groaned Marianna.

"What is it, then?"

Marianna seized Dollikins's hard little hand, and drew her sister toward her, as if she would whisper something in her ear.

CHAPTER II.

A DAY OF SURPRISES.

THE words which Dollikins waited impatiently to hear, Marianna could not speak.

"There comes mother! ask her," she said; and when Dollikins turned inquiringly toward her mother, her sister, with her eyes full of tears, left the room.

"What is the matter with everybody?" asked Dollikins. "Marianna says you ought to work for me, but not for her. Then she starts to tell me why, and cries and runs away. This has been the most dreadful day I ever knew!"

"Marianna is right, Dollikins; but if she owes me a duty, I also owe one to her. I am not strong enough to work as I have been working, and she can go where she can have a pleasant home. We can live on very little, you and I. You are strong, and always well, but she is not. Even if she were strong, I have not the same right to submit her to these hardships as I have to keep you with me. Don't say anything yet, dear, but listen to me."

The widow had said "listen to me," but she sat for many minutes mutely before Dollikins, who, being requested to say nothing, and seeing tears on her mother's cheeks, found relief, as usual, by throwing on more wood.

After a while her mother said, "Come, sit down, and let me tell you something that will sound quite like a story."

Dollikins gave a final push to an obstinate piece of wood, and took a seat beside her mother. She had a feeling that there would be something in the story that she would not enjoy.

"Don't lean on the Bradley urn when you tell it," for the solemn look in her mother's eyes troubled her more than a little. "Come, now, 'Once upon a time,'" —

"Yes, Dollikins, once upon a time there lived in a pretty house, many miles from here, a man and his wife. They would have been happy if they had not lost their only child, a beautiful baby a year old.

"One night, during a terrible storm, there came a loud ring at the door, and the man left his bed in the greatest haste to see who could be out in such weather. When he opened the door, there stood a college friend of his, with a child in his arms.

"The wife, hearing the cry of the rain-soaked baby, went and carried it to the fire."

"Go on, please," said Dollikins, as her mother paused.

"The poor baby's mother, Dollikins, was not a good woman. She had gone away, and left her child.

"'I did not know what to do with her,' said the father, 'so I brought her to you. Your child is dead; take mine, and keep her for a time, at least.' And they took the baby, after promising to do always the best they could for her; nor was it long before they loved her like their own.

"After a few years they had another child, and they christened her — Dorcas, although they called her Dollikins; but they continued to love the little Marianna just the same. And now," —

"Stop!" said Dollikins, under her breath. Then she gave a long, deep sigh, and closed her lips tightly.

"I knew it would hurt you, dearie, and so did Marianna, but it is better that you should know it. Did I not promise to do the best I could for her always? Is it best that she should stay here, when she can have so much at Uncle John's? This is why your uncle has thought for so many years that I ought to give her up. This is why Marianna thinks it her duty to go.

"You have said hard things to her to-day, but you will never believe she wants to leave us, whatever you may say.

She will always be the same to us. Come, come, Dollikins!" giving her a little shake, for the girl seemed to be gazing at nothing, and her lips were growing very white.

She had never had such a strange feeling; she could not speak, and for a moment she thought the wood in the wood-box was flying up to strike her in the head, and her mother's voice sounded far away. She arose without a word, and began to put on her cloak.

"Where are you going?" asked her mother.

Dollikins tried to answer, but her lips seemed stiff, and she did not walk quite straight as she went for her red hood.

"Wood," she said, when she came to her mittens.

Poor Dollikins! When everything else failed, she always went for wood. If in trouble, the great waves comforted her; if in the wrong, they rebuked her. How many treasures they laid at her feet! To her they had never been cruel, but always mighty, steadfast and true. She never said to any one, "How I love them!" but in her first real sorrow, she ran even from her mother's comforting words to them.

She could not remember the time when she had not played on the shore, with no companion save the sand-birds and the waves, for Marianna was always very careful of her shoes.

Wandering along the shore alone, day after day, was it strange that sometimes she talked to the waves?

"The fresh air will do her good," the widow thought, as she watched the small figure going towards the shore.

The clear air settled her brain in a moment; she threw back her head, and the color came to her lips and cheeks; but the dreadful truth remained unchanged, and she said, tearfully, to the first wave that greeted her, "Only think of it! Marianna Bradley isn't my sister!"

"What of it?" roared the wave, and rushed out again.

"Don't you love her just as much?" the next seemed to say, as it came sweeping in to take part in the conversation.

"You know I do!" she shouted; then drew back, a little ashamed, for it sometimes seemed as if she herself made the waves say the things that were in her mind.

"She is your sister just as much as she ever was," said the next. "Don't let your Uncle John have her! I'll wash the frizzles and the flounces all off your Aunt Maria."

This was the boldest wave yet. It came in much farther than any of the others. Dollikins laughed, and said, "We won't let her go."

She ran down over the wet sand, to follow the wave out as far as she could. When she turned to run back a loud laugh

startled her. It sounded so near, at first she thought it must be the water, but the next instant she saw a man standing close beside her.

"So you talk to the sea, do you?" he said. "Come, talk to me." He was dressed like a sailor, and his face and hands were very brown.

"I don't know you," she said simply.

"I dare say you don't; but you can talk to me for all that, can't you? Come, can you tell me whereabout here a miser lives named Perkins?"

"I can tell you where Mister Perkins lives." Although she called her neighbor miser herself, she resented the title on any other tongue.

"I am afraid we don't mean the same man; but I can find him. The man I mean everybody calls Miser Perkins."

"Mr. Perkins is a little stingy," she admitted.

"Oh! he is?" said the man, with a smile, which made his eyes look very pleasant. "Must be the same man. And you know where he lives?"

"I live in his house."

"Oh-ho! Now, just for a guess, your name ain't Bradley?"

"Yes, it is; Dollikins Bradley."

"Well, now, just for another guess, you ain't got a sister named Mary Annie, only she ain't your sister?"

"She is my sister!" said Dollikins fiercely, wondering if he had heard what she had said to the waves.

"HERE'S YOUR DOLLAR."

"Are ye sure of it?" He took her round chin between his thumb and forefinger, and lifting her face, looked straight down into her truthful eyes.

This seemed a little hard to her, and perhaps to him also; for when he saw the tears coming — for her heart was very sore when she thought of her sister — he laughed, and said she was a nice little craft, and he would not press her for an answer, but would give her a dollar if she would give him a curl.

"A dollar?" Dollikins gasped, in great doubt, "a dollar!"

"Yes; a dollar," returned the strange friend, smiling.

Off came the old red hood. "You know you are being cheated," she said, as he slowly opened his jack-knife.

"I always pay dear for everything I get on shore."

"Be sure you get the best one," turning the back of her head towards him.

"Blest if I don't hate to cut it!"

"Do cut it!" she said earnestly. "We've had awful bad luck lately."

"Have ye now?" cutting off a curl and winding it about his finger. "Well, they say there's lots of it around." He opened a leather bag, and she saw that it was full of gold.

"O, dear!" she whispered; "how rich you are!"

"Here's your dollar."

"You know — it — it really is not worth one cent," she stammered, as she took the little gold dollar.

"If I want to give a dollar for a barnacle, don't you fret."

"I don't want you to waste your money, but I want to take it."

"Don't you think that is better than to buy grog at the tavern?"

"Why don't you give all your money to your wife to keep? Women don't go to the tavern."

"You see, whenever I've struck a port, my wife has just left it, so I never happen to see her."

"That's a joke; but I wish you would trust me to keep it for you; sometimes mother lets me keep her money, and she says, 'Now, Dollikins, don't let me have that until I really must'; but you don't know me. Of course you think I would spend it."

"I'm blest if I don't try you with a twenty piece." He opened the bag again and took out a twenty-dollar gold piece. "Now," he continued, opening her small hand and putting the money in it, "you are the Sailors' Bank; if you spend that you are a bank-robber; if, when you are married, I haven't come back, you may take it and buy you a wedding present."

"No; I will never spend it, and you will always know that you have some money."

"Mind you, it must be the same piece."

"Why, of course."

"I must go now, and hunt up the miser."

"I better put this inside my mitten."

"Make the bank safe, little woman."

"I've put my dollar in the other hand, because I couldn't feel it if I had it with the big one."

"That's all snug," he said, and they walked away towards

the little black house. "Do you suppose the miser is cruising round home now?" he asked, after they had walked awhile in silence.

"Why, he can't go away; he has the rheumatism so he can't walk."

"Very well; if you're sure he's anchored, I'll call later," and he turned away towards the village.

"Stop a minute!" she cried, running after him. "Are you going to the tavern?"

"I thought I might put in there a spell for repairs."

"Then, won't you please let me keep your bag for you till you come back?"

He looked at her with such a serious look in his good-natured eyes that she was afraid he was offended; but he laughed again and called her a land-shark. Then he rubbed her cold little nose, and told her to go keep the miser's money.

The moment he was out of sight she looked in her mittens to see that the gold was safe.

"He called me the Sailors' Bank," she said to herself, as she replaced the twenty dollars in her mitten, and took out her own tiny piece. "And he knows the miser! Of course he isn't any relation to him, or he never would give a dollar for

a curl. I suppose I cheated him, but I told him it wasn't worth anything, and I did want some money so much!

"I shall go right down to the store and buy some meat for a stew. I won't buy much, but in two days I shall buy some more. I'll show Miss Bradley that there is no need of her going away. Oh! if I could get a dollar apiece for every curl on my old top-knot, wouldn't we live!"

She ran to the village store where one could buy meat or lace, oats or ribbon, and the good-natured boy served her very generously, she thought.

When she was leaving she saw some blue ribbon, just the shade that Miss Bradley most admired. She bought enough for a bow, and found that it had cost her as much as her meat. But she went home light-hearted, in spite of the fact.

When she came in sight of the house her heart fell, and a strange feeling took possession of her; the same that she had felt when her mother had told her that Marianna was not her sister.

There, before the door, stood a fine carriage. The coachman sat perfectly erect, and seemed to look scornfully about; and a little dog sitting beside him barked furiously.

The miser was looking out from his side of the house, in an old flannel night-cap, and she thought that if the coachman

had known that she had that very morning taken the miser for her mission, his air would be still more scornful.

Dollikins had never seen this carriage before, but she had not a doubt that it belonged to her Uncle John. She had been carrying the meat for the stew in one hand, and the blue ribbon in the other, for fear of contact; but now meat and ribbon were both clutched convulsively, and held close to her sore little heart.

She gazed at the handsome carriage, and the smooth horses with their gold-mounted harness; at the stately driver, with the scornful air, and last, at the senseless little dog that seemed ready to fall to pieces, in rage, at having to stop at such a miserable place.

"And Marianna is going away in this carriage," she thought; "she will never taste the stew, nor care now for the blue-ribbon bow!" And Dollikins had thought they would make her so happy!

She went into the house by the back way, and dropped the meat and the ribbon on the kitchen table. The door was ajar, and she could hear the moderate voice of her uncle.

"Don't go till you get ready, if it isn't for a month, only if you go, make up your mind that you must stay."

"But it will be just as easy to go to-day as any time," said

her Aunt Maria. "When you have once got over fretting for your mother, Marianna, you will wonder how you could ever have been contented here."

"I have been very happy always," said Marianna, in a tremulous voice.

"Yes; but you are no longer a child," said her aunt impatiently; "you are seventeen years old, and you are really a very pretty girl."

"Come, come," said Uncle John, "we don't think any more of her for that, Maria."

"Yes, we do," said Aunt Maria; "didn't I give up the idea of taking her cousin Charlotte because she was awkward, and no amount of money or trouble would ever make her anything else?"

"I would have taken Charlotte very quickly," said Uncle John, "only she wouldn't leave her mother; didn't she come and stay three months, and then say she would rather go barefooted, and live on a crust, than to leave home? I didn't know she was awkward. I liked her first-rate. I won't hear a word against Charlotte Bradley."

"Don't say any more about Charlotte, and I won't," said Aunt Maria; "she was never in any respect satisfactory. No matter what color I put on her, I always said to myself, 'Maria

Bradley, did you order that costume'? And I have lain awake nights trying to think of something that would make her bearable. Then do you remember how she used to insist upon saying, 'Ain't there any little odd job I can do for you, Aunt Maria? I have nothing to do this morning.' And once she said right out before a maid, 'I'm homesick for some good hard work.'"

"If she would have staid, I would have vouched for her laziness and selfishness in time;" and Uncle John laughed heartily. "But see here, Maria, I thought we were not going to say any more about Charlotte; only let it be understood if Marianna goes that she is never to ask to do any little odd job; and, above all, let it be perfectly understood that whoever goes this time, goes to stay."

"I want somebody that money won't be wasted on," exclaimed Aunt Maria, looking at her graceful niece with open admiration in her face, "and I am going to have somebody. I am going to have Marianna!"

"I know that I ought to go," murmured Marianna meekly, "but it will seem so sudden to Dolly; I did not tell her until to-day that I had any thought of going. You see, Uncle John, although I do mean to go — I did not think of going so soon."

"It seems like a hard move, but in the end it will be much better for you; I would not say it if I did not believe it, little girl."

"Uncle John is right, Marianna," said the widow, trying to smile bravely.

"It is not as if you were going away from your own mother," said Aunt Maria.

This was more than Dollikins could bear. She forgot that she had been listening; she burst into the sitting-room with her eyes ablaze, and a red flame in her round cheeks.

"My mother is Marianna's mother!" she cried.

"Ho, ho, ho!" said her uncle, "whom have we here? Dollikins, I do believe, grown to be a young lady! Now, that's the girl I want, Maria; she looks just like my mother. You don't see such women nowadays. How mother used to make us boys stand round! All but your father, Dollikins; he was too much like her," and Uncle John looked down into Dollikins's glowing face with such affectionate admiration that it unarmed her immediately.

"Is that little Dollikins?" exclaimed her aunt; "why, of course the child had to grow; but I always would think of her as a fat little thing that took three steps, and then sat down very hard."

DOLLIKINS BURST INTO THE SITTING-ROOM WITH HER EYES ABLAZE.

Dollikins turned indignantly towards her aunt; but her uncle took her hand kindly, and her mother gave her a warning look.

"O John! wouldn't she be fine in private theatricals?" cried her aunt enthusiastically. "You shall come to see Marianna, and stay just as long as you please, Dollikins."

"No, no," said her uncle; "if Dolly comes at all, she comes to stay; now let that be understood. Why, I missed Charlotte so much that I didn't want to go home at night for a week after she left, and she didn't look a bit like mother. The one that you take this time, Maria, is the one that's got to stay."

"Do you think I would leave my mother to live in a house like this, and I go to live in a palace!"

"A palace!" exclaimed her aunt; "isn't her innocence charming, John?"

Uncle John had thrown himself upon the old hair-cloth sofa, and was gazing at the ceiling. When he spoke he did not turn his eyes toward his wife.

"This is your last chance, Maria; if you don't get one to-day, or the promise sure of one, this is the last time I will ever go anywhere trying to get people to give their children away."

Still with his eyes on the ceiling, he said, "Dolly, will you go home and live with us?"

"Thank you, ever and ever so much, Uncle John, but I will never leave my mother."

"I don't blame you, my child"—he spoke more moderately than usual—"but you, Marianna, you are not a Bradley—will you come?"

He did not look at either niece as he spoke. Marianna turned her white face towards her mother.

Dollikins stood like one in a dream; and a gentle rap upon the door aroused her as if from sleep.

CHAPTER III.

MORE CALLERS AT THE BRADLEYS.

WHEN Dollikins was on her way to market she saw old Miss Stacy driving in her "shay." Beside her sat a fashionably-dressed boy not far from Dollikins's age. "Behold me, and my sister's grandson!" said Dollikins mentally, as she returned the old lady's bow; and the "shay" and its occupants passed out of sight and mind.

But Miss Stacy, having an errand near the miser's house, was forced to bear the whole Bradley family in mind by seeing a fine carriage standing at the miser's door. "You see they are well connected," she said to her companion, as if continuing a conversation.

"But that little one is a terror," returned the boy, in a tone of a young man who considers himself not easily awed; "the first time I ever saw her was when I went to Mrs. Bradley's to get some sewing she was doing for you; and while I was waiting, she came into the room and looked at me, and grinned, and said, 'Good-morning, Charlie! how's the king?'"

"How very strange; what did she mean?" murmured Miss Stacy.

"Well, she knocked me, you know."

"Knocked you! Do you mean she knocked you, Archie?"

"I mean she floored me. It was because I had on knee-breeches, and wore my hair banged. Afterward she told me I looked like one of the banged boys in the picture of the children of Charles the First. Didn't you ever see it?"

"I thought it must be because you were dressed well."

"That wasn't as bad as the way she treated me last summer. I was walking on the shore, and I came across her all alone, sitting in a dory, and she said. 'Your pants are so short, Sonny, won't you push this dory off for me?' We dragged the boat down to the water, and when a big wave came in I thought it would be good fun to hear Miss Dollikins squeal. When a daisy wave came I was going to let her go, but I got washed off my legs, and she pulled me into the boat, and then she rowed out, and anchored just outside the breakers — and fished! O, Moses, wasn't I sick! and she wouldn't go in till she had caught all the fish she wanted. She kept calling me Miss Stacy's sister's grandson till I felt as if I never had any name — oh! it makes me sick now to think of it, and" —

"Never mind, Archie; you need not tell any more."

"She said she didn't invite me to go because she was afraid I would not enjoy it, but as long as I would go, we must make the best of it. Halloo! I know that team; it's Mr. Bradley's! He lives on our street. Lots of sugar."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Miss Stacy; "lives on your street; deals in sugar."

"Glory, no! Got plenty o' sugar; that's money."

"Oh! why not say money, and leave out the glory? it sounds wicked to say glory."

"Well, don't stop altogether, as if you never saw a carriage before."

"Archie, look at me; how do I look?"

"Scrubby."

"Scrubby, Archie!"

"Why, yes! all country people look scrubby."

"Does your grandmother look scrubby?" Miss Stacy spoke reproachfully.

"Of course not."

"We were brought up together."

"But grandmother went to the city when she was married, didn't she?

"Yes."

"And you staid here. That's what's the matter."

Miss Stacy had a great respect for the opinion of her sister's grandson. She had made up her mind to make some excuse to call at Mrs. Bradley's; but the word "scrubby" influenced her to turn the old horse about suddenly, and to drive home as rapidly as was consistent with his ideas of dignity.

With haste she donned her best black cashmere and real lace cap, and while her sister's grandson was appropriating her company fruit cake, drove back to the miser's house, arriving there just as Mr. Bradley was asking poor Marianna to go home with him.

"I fear I intrude," she gasped, as Dollikins opened the door, and she caught sight of the family council. "I called to see Miss Marianna a moment — just a moment."

The widow received her politely, but not warmly.

Mr. Bradley arose, and his wife bristled with indignation at the intrusion.

Marianna, thankful for a reprieve from the fateful question her uncle had asked, received her almost cordially.

For a while the ball of conversation was thrown politely, but languidly, among the elders; and was finally rescued from coming to a dead stop by a lively toss from Dollikins, who asked how Miss Stacy's sister's grandson liked Perkins' Bluff in cold weather.

"It is a little too cold yet for him to visit the Bluff much," said Miss Stacy mildly, "but he is going to stay two days with me. The village is not so bad, is it now, Mr. Bradley?"

Mr. Bradley spoke a polite word for the village.

"Apropos of my sister's grandson," said Miss Stacy, with a faint flush of pride coming to her faded cheeks, "I think my sister lives near you in Boston, Mrs. Bradley."

"It may be," Aunt Maria observed with an indifference which deepened the flush on the old lady's cheeks; "what name did you say?"

"Mrs. Harvey Morse."

"Can it be!" exclaimed Aunt Maria, with enthusiasm. "Why, John, you know Mrs. Morse and her picturesque grandson?"

"I know Mr. Morse very well," he returned cordially, "and I hope to know Mrs. Morse."

"Now, you see, Marianna, when you come to us you will know one young gentleman," said Aunt Maria gaily.

"Is Miss Marianna thinking of paying Boston a visit?" inquired Miss Stacy.

"A long one, we hope, Miss Stacy," Aunt Maria hastened to answer, with a sudden desire to secure the old lady as an ally.

The satisfied smile that settled on Miss Stacy's features was not wholly due to gratification at Marianna's prospects. She had discovered the cause of the coming of the fine carriage; the real reason of Mr. Bradley's visit, without asking questions which would sound like vulgar curiosity.

"What good fortune!" she exclaimed; and the exclamation satisfied herself as well as the rest.

Aunt Maria noticed that Miss Stacy was well dressed for the country, and the old lady glided easily — in spite of the widow wishing to have it otherwise — into the current of the Bradleys' affairs.

"I always felt," she declared, "that Miss Marianna was born for something better than a life at Perkins' Bluff."

"Hear! hear!" cried Aunt Maria, clapping her hands playfully.

"Marianna is not to go against her will," said Uncle John seriously; "but if she decides to go she must stay."

"She will be very happy, I am sure," said his wife cheerfully, "and Dollikins can come to see her whenever she pleases."

Dollikins's lips closed tightly. To her Miss Stacy stood as a representative of the town, and she could not make an exhibition of her feelings before her; and Marianna did not appear to reflect her aunt's cheerfulness in a manner wholly

satisfactory to that relative, who said, a little impatiently, "I am sure Miss Stacy would be a fair judge, Marianna; let me put the whole case before her."

The whole case! Dollikins's cheeks flamed like two scarlet flowers blossoming suddenly; the whole case, in Aunt Maria's hands, meant that all the poverty and trials that they had so carefully concealed from everybody until now, must be dragged out, and paraded before Miss Stacy. She looked at her mother, whose mind seemed to be absent as she gazed upon the beautiful girl who was as dear to her as her own blood, and Dollikins thought, "Mother isn't going to say anything, but the minute Aunt Maria starts off with the whole case, I will scream 'Stop'! in a way that will frighten them all so much they will forget what they came for." But greatly to her surprise, Marianna said gently, but in a manner that showed Dollikins that her sister could never have listened to the "whole case," "It is all settled, Aunt Maria; we need not trouble Miss Stacy to decide anything."

Dollikins threw back her head with a proud smile which was faintly reflected upon the lips of her mother.

"Don't speak like that, Marianna," returned the old lady suddenly. "Do you think I have no interest in your going away? Pray who is to make my every-day caps, if you leave us?"

"If you will send the material I will make them," said Marianna, smiling faintly.

"I doubt if you will have the time," said her aunt.

"No, indeed!" cried Miss Stacy, "nor the inclination, I fear. People in the city are supposed to have all the time there is, as I tell Mrs. Morse, but there never seems to be as much time as there is in the country; but never fear, Miss Marianna, that after you leave Perkins' Bluff you will ever be troubled with your old country friends' caps." Miss Stacy spoke with the utmost amiability, which soothed Aunt Maria, but stirred Dollikins.

"Marianna will always be the same," said that sturdy opponent of indolence and airs, "always the same! and if you want her to make your caps I know she will find time to do it; beside, I am interested myself in your caps, Miss Stacy, if you are going to pay in hens."

Miss Stacy blushed a little, and smiled apologetically.

The last cap Marianna had made, not having the thirty-seven cents in hand, Miss Stacy had cleared the account from her books and conscience, by sending the young girl an old hen, which caused Dollikins to be suddenly seized with the idea of starting a hen farm.

"No, no," said Miss Stacy, almost playfully, "we must not

deceive ourselves, Dollikins; when Miss Bradley lives in the city she will have enough to do without country caps to make. Why, it is astonishing the number of places city people can visit in a day; and when country folks are ready for bed, in the city they say the evening has just begun. Miss Bradley will be very gay, I have no doubt. I shall hear all about her when Archie comes down."

"Archie is coming down now," exclaimed Dollikins, who stood near the window.

Miss Stacy's sister's grandson, after eating fruit cake until it had lost its flavor, began to look about for his aunt, and not finding her, he thought she had tried to make herself look less scrubby, and was then on her way, without escort, to the Bradleys.

Seeing a grocer's wagon going by, he hailed the driver, a boy about his own age, and asked him if he thought of going near Perkins' Bluff.

"Do you want to see your uncle bad?" returned the boy, with a grin. "Sorry, but I took the miser a paper of tacks for a soup last week: no order this week."

Archie returned the grin, and climbed up beside him. "Going that way?" he asked, as the boy drove on.

"I don't mind spilling you out there for a quarter; yes, I'll

promise to do it for a quarter. Ain't many folks passing that way — I wouldn't drive you through the town for less than fifty cents."

"Thanks, awfully; don't happen to care to go through the town," and twenty-five cents went from a pocket of Archie's handsomely fitting corduroys, to a pocket of the grimy and slouchy breeches of the driver.

Perhaps it was only to be faithful to his promise that the boy started the horse while Archie was descending before the Bradley windows, causing him to measure his handsome length upon the ground just as Dollikins looked out of the window.

Marianna and Dollikins ran out, and Miss Stacy hastened to the door, crying, "O, Archie! are you hurt? What if you had broken your neck!"

"Sweet kind of a great-aunt you are!" he murmured, wiping the mud from his amiable face.

"Couldn't you jump out of a wagon without landing on your head?" asked Dollikins.

"It seems not," he returned good naturedly; "why, I paid a quarter for that spill."

"Oh! you didn't," she exclaimed. "He was coming right up here, and he ought to have brought you for nothing."

"If my great-aunt wouldn't bring me, how could I expect a

grocer boy to do it?" he whispered as they went into the house.

He did not seem as much surprised or pleased at the idea of Marianna's living on the same street with His Highness, as Dollikins had imagined he would be. "He does not know enough to appreciate her," she thought, "but what can you expect of a boy fourteen years old that will wear his hair like a terrier?"

Aunt Maria evidently admired Archie very much, which did not tend to advance him in Dollikins's estimation; yet on the whole she enjoyed his call, and felt, in spite of her pain, a satisfaction that her sister would be of some consequence in the world.

CHAPTER IV.

DOLLIKINS STANDS BY THE MISER.

THE following day the miser sat alone in his dirty room before the fireplace where Dollikins had piled up the wood, but where now not a live spark remained.

Little his young neighbor imagined, as she staggered home with her load of drift-wood, and stopped to leave him a part, that his cellar was nearly full of it. The three dollars a month which her mother paid for rent did not include the cellar, and they were not granted a sight of anything for which they did not pay.

A savory smell came stealing in through the crack of the door. With an angry scowl the hungry man wrinkled the skin on his thin nose, and sniffed the air.

"Can't pay their rent, but they can live like nabobs!" he muttered.

The savory smell grew stronger, and in a moment Dollikins came in with her hands full. She placed a large waiter which she had brought upon the table, and went to the fireplace.

"I declare, the ashes are cold!" she exclaimed, looking severely at the old man.

"Do you know any little gal that kicked up a lot of dust yesterday, and then went off and left a pile of dirt in the middle of the floor?"

"Wasn't that too bad? But I had a terrible day after I left you! I never thought of dirt again."

"Your grand relations made you forget a poor man."

"I did forget you, Mr. Perkins; and when I tell you that Uncle John and Aunt Maria came to take Marianna to live with them — forever, perhaps — you will excuse me for forgetting a little pile of dirt."

"Miss Stacy came, too."

"Yes."

"And that girl-boy: that's the way they used to cut the hair on a silly, when I was a boy."

"What's a silly?"

"Don't ye know what a silly is? It's a fool — a idjot."

"An idiot?"

"That's about it."

"You are very polite to our callers."

"What is Miss Stacy a-wheedling round your mother for?" giving no heed to Dollikins's sharp thrust.

"You are bound to be disagreeable to-day, just because I forgot your dirt, Mr. Perkins."

"Well, well, well; so Miss Mary Annie is going to be a fine lady at last, is she?"

"No, she isn't!"

"Ain't she going?"

"Not for a week."

"What's a week?"

"Seven days."

Dollikins wondered that she could laugh, but there was a hope in her heart that before the seven days were gone there would be some plan formed to keep Miss Bradley at home. She deliberated a moment, then went for wood and built a fire.

"Now, do you know what you are going to have?" she said, gathering up a plate, knife and fork from the untidy table.

"I know what I ain't going to have while you stay; that's peace."

"Never mind what you are not going to have; what you are going to have is a respectable dinner. I will put the stew down by the fire while I set the table."

"Give me the stew on my knee, and go tell your mother I'm much obliged, though it don't go towards the rent."

"No, sir; you must have a table-cloth."

She brushed up the dirt, and put a white cloth upon the table. Then she went to the cupboard, and, climbing into a chair, took a quiet survey.

"Don't touch nothin' on that upper shelf, mind ye!" cried the miser; but Dollikins had gone quite out of sight.

When she came back, her forehead was partly veiled by a large cobweb, and she held in her hand a handsome sugar-bowl, covered with dust.

"That ain't been touched for forty year!" he cried helplessly.

"Time it was washed!" she said briskly, and placed it carefully upon the table. Then she went back to her exploring again. The next time she returned with a cup and saucer, and last with plates and some silver spoons.

"Don't take them out!" he whined. "Them was my mother's."

"I'll be very careful."

When everything was prepared, she said, "I wonder which would be the easiest, to wheel you up to the table, or push the table up to you?"

"If you try to move that table, you'll break every dish on it."

"Then I will wheel you to the table."

"Ye can't do it; ye ain't stout enough. What did ye ever set the table for, anyhow? If I could have got on to my feet, ye wouldn't ha' done it."

"There you go!" she cried, wheeling his great dirty chair along.

TAKING A SURVEY.

"Mind ye, this don't go towards the rent," as he reached the table.

"Oh! you are a mean man," she cried, going to the other side of the table to pour out the tea.

"Here's victuals enough to last a week!" his shrewd, hungry eyes glancing over the table. "How can ye afford meat for stews, and wheat bread — yes, it is wheat bread!"

"Don't you think about affording, Mr. Perkins, but just eat. Is the stew good?"

"Of course it's good, if you can pay for it."

"This is all paid for."

For awhile he ate, and said nothing. When his first hunger was satisfied, he looked up, and something almost like pleasure shone in his deep-set eyes as he said, "You favor my sister Betty."

"Was she careless and wasteful?"

"Yes, she was." He mused a moment, and then began eating again. After a while he paused once more, and said, "She used to set in mother's place after mother died; she wasn't a mite bigger then than you be now. She used to play with the sugar-bowl, just like you're doin'. Father used to set here, and Ben over there. Ain't one of them left now; not one of 'em alive now."

"Why do you suppose you didn't die?"

"Me? Oh! I was tough."

"Maybe that wasn't the reason," she said, taking up a spoonful of sugar, and letting it slide slowly off the spoon.

"What do you suppose?"

"I don't like to tell."

"Why don't ye?"

"You know what you are." She spoke softly, looking down into the depths of the sugar-bowl.

"No, I don't." He seemed to enjoy her confusion.

"A miser!"

The words came out suddenly, like a bullet out of a gun; but if it struck him, it did not hurt much, for he only said: "A miser is a man that's got money, Mistress Dollikins. I ain't got money."

"I thought you had."

"No, no! I am a poor man. There ain't a dollar in this house."

"There is! There is gold in this house!" she said, shaking her finger at him over the table.

"Gold, Dollikins!" he gasped. "Gold!"

He had pushed himself away from the table, and now he tried to stand upon his feet. "Where did it come from, child?"

"From a sailor."

"Who told ye?" His thin face seemed to grow thinner. "Has your mother seen it?"

"Why, yes! I showed it to her. You don't care. It doesn't belong to you."

He rose to his feet, but fell helplessly back into his chair.

"Where is it now?" he whispered. "Where is it now, Dollikins?"

"In my room, in a box."

He seemed to be in such distress she took his hand and tried to comfort him.

"Yes! yes!" he murmured, clinging to her. "You will stand by me. Mary Annie won't, nor your mother won't, but you will, Dollikins! I was only keeping it for

you, because you are all so wasteful. Just like Betty, you know."

"Keeping what for us?"

"The gold?"

"What gold, Mr. Perkins?"

"The gold the sailor brought."

"Why, he only brought it to-day!"

"How did he get it, Dollikins? Did I sleep?"

It was a pitiful sight: the old man unable to stand upon his feet, crouching before his arm-chair, and tearing away the filthy cushions with his thin, trembling fingers.

"When — when did you see him, Dollikins?" His voice was hardly above a whisper.

"The sailor, do you mean?"

"Yes, yes! the sailor."

"Yesterday. He was coming to see you. He knows you."

"Did ye find the gold yerself, Dollikins?"

"Why, no, Mr. Perkins! How funny you are! He gave it to me, but only to keep for him."

"Didn't he get it here?" whispered the miser, hugging the cushion.

"No, indeed! He took it out of a bag — out of a leather bag. What ails you, Mr. Perkins?"

"He went right off ag'in — right off ag'in to sea, Dollikins?"

"No, he didn't. He is coming here to see you."

"No! no! no! Don't let him in! He wants to make out I would steal; but you — you will stand by me? You will tell him I wouldn't steal!"

"Of course you wouldn't!"

"No, no, Dollikins, I wouldn't steal a cent! It's all there — the three hunderd! Sewed up in the cushion. Three hunderd in gold! Mary Annie's father sent it to your mother. I was only keeping it for her — ye are all so wasteful, so wasteful!"

"Marianna's father!" exclaimed Dollikins. "And did you know Marianna wasn't my sister all the time?"

"Small difference that makes," said the miser, feeling of the cushion. "Jest hand me a knife, and I'll cut out the three hunderd."

"Yes, do!" she said joyfully. "I'd like to see it."

"No; tain't proper to give it to you; go fetch your mother."

When she had gone, he drew out from the hole he had cut in the end of the cushion a soiled bundle, and placed it upon his knee.

"There it is!" he said, "there it is! I won't open it; if I

THE LITTLE MAID LEFT THEM ALL AND STOOD BY HIS SIDE.

saw it shine maybe I couldn't give it up. How they'll waste it! Eat it up in a month, maybe; but it ain't mine. I never counted it mine; I was only keeping it for 'em. And I loved to see them poor."

He was startled by a loud rap upon the door, and the next moment the sailor came in, followed by the widow, Marianna and Dollikins.

"When I went home I found the sailor-man talking to mother and Marianna," said Dollikins, "and he won't hurt you at all, Mr. Perkins."

The miser made an effort to stand upon his feet, but his lame legs refused to hold him up. In his shame and pain — for he felt shame — he looked from face to face. For the first time in many years he felt the need of human sympathy.

"Ye said ye'd stand by me, Dollikins," he said.

The little maid left them all and stood by his side.

This reinforcement seemed to give him courage, for he turned towards the sailor and said, "I knew yesterday that ye'd got home; I ain't surprised."

"The old nag told you, I suppose," said the sailor, throwing back his head and giving a hearty laugh. "And he told me, 'pon his honor, he hadn't had a mouthful since I was on shore before."

Then, in a moment, the merriment faded from his face, and he pointed scornfully at the old man. "Look at him!" he said, turning to the widow and Marianna. "That man is my uncle; a miser and a thief!"

"No, not a thief," said Dollikins, "because he told me he was only keeping the money for us. He never would have really taken it. He is a miser, but he can't help it."

"No, I can't help it," repeated the old man feebly, "but I ain't a thief." He reached the dirty bundle towards the widow. "It's all there — the three hunderd."

"It is Marianna's," said the widow.

"It is yours," said the sailor. "Marianna's father gave it to me four years ago to bring to you. He was dying in a foreign port, and because I was an American sailor, he trusted me to bring it home. It was all he had, and he sent it with a blessing. I promised to give it myself into your hands, but when we put into Boston I found I hadn't the time to run down here, and I was afraid to send gold by the stage. I met him, and handed it over to him to give to you. We'd had misers and spendthrifts and tipplers in the family, but never a thief!"

The miser winced at the word thief, but sat there without raising his eyes, still hugging the old chair-cushion.

"You have had the use of that money for four years," said the sailor, "now just hand over the interest."

"Where am I to get any money?" said the miser, in a trembling tone.

"Just where you took that package from — out of that nasty cushion."

"No, no, no! Mrs. Bradley wouldn't say that."

"Very well; let the law settle it."

"Give me time!" moaned the miser; "give me time!"

"I'll give you just five minutes. It's a hard cape to round, Uncle Perkins, but you will find yourself in smoother waters if you do it."

"How much?" murmured the miser.

"Lawful interest."

Dollikins will never forget the scene. An old man, with trembling, reluctant hands, picking from the rags of an old chair-cushion the dollars he must pay for the enjoyment he had had of only counting over the gold for four years — the gold which had been so much needed by the poor widow under his own roof.

"I have taken out the six dollars for rent," he said.

His nephew, after counting it with great care, declared it to be right, and handed it to the widow.

They helped the feeble old man into his miserable bed, and Marianna and Dollikins stayed to clear the table, and make the room a little more tidy, while the sailor went with Mrs. Bradley to tell her all he knew of Marianna's father. The sisters worked hard, and when the day was done the miser's room looked tidier and brighter than it had for many a day.

"Only think what a looking room this is!" said Dollikins.

"It really makes me sick to stay here," returned Marianna; "why not go now; we can't do any more."

"Wait a minute; see how sick he looks. I want to tell him something. Mr. Perkins?"

The miser turned his eyes towards them at the sound of Dollikins's voice, but did not speak.

"This is not New Year's Day," continued Dollikins, "but we are going to turn over a new leaf. Now that Miss Bradley has three hundred dollars, of course she won't have to go away"—

"What does he know about my going away?" Marianna asked.

"Oh! he knows; I told him. We are going to turn over a new leaf, Mr. Perkins. Miss Bradley is going to work more, and not be so afraid of her hands, and I am going to keep a

strong hold on my temper. Did you know I had an awful temper, Mr. Perkins?"

"That's right," said the miser absently; "work more and spend less. Save yer money; three hunderd dollars don't come in with every tide."

"Why don't you turn over a new leaf, too?" said Dollikins, going to the bedside.

"Me? Oh! I'm too old."

"Why don't you try?" urged Dollikins; "try with all your might and main not to be a miser."

"And try to be a little neater," said Marianna mildly.

"That's just like you, Miss Bradley!" said Dollikins; "now I am afraid he won't try to do anything. Don't you think he'd better try not to be stingy first? Don't want to discourage him, do you?"

Marianna walked towards the bed, but stopped suddenly, when within a few feet of it, holding back her skirts as if she feared they might touch it.

"I think I would rather be mean than dirty," she said solemnly. "Why, Doll, he sleeps without sheets! If he would buy some sheets — why wouldn't that be a good way to begin?"

"That would be a splendid way to begin, Mr. Perkins," said

Dollikins. "It will be hard for you to spend the money, and it will make you neat."

"I will hem them for you, gladly," said Marianna.

"Will you buy them?" cried the enthusiastic Dollikins. "Let me take some money out now!" and she reached for the precious cushion.

"No, no, no!" he said; "I don't want sheets. I ain't a nabob, I'm a poor man."

Marianna turned away in disgust, and left the room.

"The first thing you better try to do," said Dollikins solemnly, "is to try to put that cushion down. First see if you can put it down to the foot of the bed, or let me put it back on the chair."

"How you do pester me," he said; "go home!"

"Don't you mean to try?" She spoke in a disappointed tone.

"Ye ain't put the chiny things back yet in the cupboard; go put 'em all back."

"No; we want the table to look pretty; besides, the cupboard is too dirty. I am going to wash it for you to-morrow."

"Go home!" he said, "go home!"

Dollikins left in despair. She did not know that some little

seeds had been sown that must take root alone, in the dark, where the sower could not see them.

After she had gone he lay very quiet, looking about. The table stood in the middle of the room, with the well-remembered china upon it. How many, many years since he had seen it!

The night had fallen, and the darkness crept to the windows, but the fire burned as brightly as in the long ago when his mother, in that very room, piled on the wood with as free a hand as Dollikins. The china and the table-cloth made him think of his mother and Betty. He sat up in bed and leaned upon his elbow.

"Yes," he said softly, "father set there, and mother set there, and Ben there, and me there, and Betty there. Mother went first, then Betty set in her place. No kin to me now on the earth 'cept Betty's boy, and he called me a thief! Bah! I wish them pesky gals hadn't left them dishes out; my head aches thinkin' of 'em all settin' round the table — and it ain't any good to one of 'em; it ain't a mite o' good. I'm glad they ain't here."

Long after the fire went out he lay thinking, and muttering to himself: "All pretty talk for young folks to turn over new leaves, but they better let old folks alone."

Suddenly he took the old chair-cushion, that had been all the time under his arm, and laid it at a little distance from him; but every moment he put out his hand to be sure that it was safe, and as a drowsy feeling stole over him, he reached for it with both hands, and put it under his head. But he was a man of will, and he had turned his face towards the right.

"O, God," he whispered, "it is too late!"

He sat up again, and said softly, "Did ye think I would steal, mother?" and with the little strength he could command, he threw the cushion at the old chair. He could see nothing; but he heard it fall upon the floor. He tried to reach for it, but it was too far away; his head felt dizzy, and his whole body full of pain. Then he forgot everything.

CHAPTER V.

A PRESENT OFFERED AND REFUSED.

WHEN the miser awoke, he thought he had had a long, troubled dream. He looked about him, and saw Dollikins sitting near the bed, sewing on a great piece of white cloth.

"Do you know me?" she asked, looking kindly into his pale face.

"Yes." He spoke faintly. "You are Mistress Dollikins. Mother and Betty are gone."

"There, you must not talk. If you say anything queer, you are not to talk. Mother and Marianna have gone to the village for some more medicine. If you say anything queer, I shall not talk to you. Do you feel any better?"

He did not answer, but looked about, and was surprised to find himself in a clean bed.

"Where is the cushion?" he asked feebly.

This did not strike her as being very queer, and she said, "It is under the bed."

"I want to see it," he said anxiously.

"You can't have it on the clean sheets, but I will poke it out so you can see it." She drew it out with the tongs to a spot where he could see it without moving. He tried to speak, but felt himself going off into a dream again. After awhile he opened his eyes and said, "Didn't Betty's boy come?"

This struck her as very queer, and she said he must not talk any more.

He closed his eyes and seemed to sleep. She went on sewing, wondering if, when he was able to get up, he would be as stingy as ever.

A shadow fell across the window, and she looked up and saw the sailor beckoning to her. She dropped her work, and went softly to the door, feeling glad that he had come at last to inquire about his uncle. But there was little anxiety in his tone or face as he said, "How is my uncle, Miss Dollikins?"

"He is better. He knew me just now."

"He won't die, then?"

"Die! Why, you wicked man! Didn't you know that to expect him to die is almost as bad as to wish he would die?"

He smiled a rather significant smile.

"Won't you go in and see him?" she asked, as he turned to go away.

"No. If he is better, the sight of me might make him worse."

"Just look in and see how nice the room looks."

She opened the door and he peeped in. The spirit of good taste and cleanliness had had a hard struggle with meanness and dirt, but it smiled its triumph in clean, although well-darned curtains, a white floor, fresh covers upon the old arm-chair and lounge, a tidy bed, and shining andirons at the fireplace.

"It beats all," he said, as she softly closed the door again, "what a woman will do! There never was an old hull yet that some woman wouldn't vow was worth a new rigging. The Lord will reward you, Miss, but don't you ever run away with the notion that Uncle Perkins will," and, with a low bow, he went hastily away.

When Dollikins returned to her work the sick man asked her what time it was.

"Do you mean what time o' day?" she said. "It's four o'clock; but it is nine days since we began on the new leaf, Mr. Perkins, and I haven't lost my temper once. You couldn't do much, you know, because you have been sick. I felt dreadfully sorry about it."

Again Dollikins was discouraged, when she should have been most hopeful, for the miser's dreams had done him good.

"Where did ye get all that wood?" he asked, pointing to a high pile by the fireplace.

"I brought it from the shore. The doctor said you must be kept warm, night and day. You never saw so much wood as we have burnt. And mother had to sit up all night and sleep in the daytime, and then Marianna and I had to stay with you. Sometimes you called me Betty."

"Had a fever, ain't I?"

She nodded.

For a few days after this he hardly spoke, but watched Marianna or Dollikins, as one or the other sat by the window sewing.

One day he said, "Dollikins, what are you sewing on?"

"Sheets," said Dollikins.

"For your mother?"

"No; for you."

"Who bought 'em?"

"Mother."

"Whose money?"

"Why, her own."

He was silent for some time, but kept his eyes upon her. Then he said, "I don't want your mother to go to expense on my account; d'ye understand?"

"Just what I told mother!" she said joyfully.

"Hand me the cushion, and I'll pay ye now," he said with dignity.

She brought it without the aid of the tongs, and handed him her scissors. He ripped open the end of the cushion, took out a dollar and handed it to her.

"Why, they cost more than a dollar!" she exclaimed.

"More than a dollar!" he gasped. "Sheets cost more than a dollar!"

"Never mind!" she said soothingly. "Mother said she would like to give them to you."

"I'll talk to your mother. There's the medicine, and the doctor — what in life did ye call the doctor for?"

"Do you suppose we were going to let you die?" she said indignantly.

"No, no! I wasn't fit to die."

"Oh! I didn't mean that," she said hastily.

"Come, now, how much wood did ye burn, Dollikins?"

"Half as much as this room full, I should think."

"Go down in the cellar, and take just as much as you used — but not a stick more; mind ye, now, not a stick more!"

"The wood was mine, Mr. Perkins. You don't suppose I counted the sticks, do you?"

She waved her hand scornfully.

A red flame burned in the miser's cheeks. "I'll pay ye all in a lump," he said.

She put the cushion back, and returned to her sewing, hoping he would keep his word.

Day after day she watched him, and was rewarded many times by his acts of justice, if not of generosity. When he was able to walk about he learned how much his sickness had cost, and paid for everything exactly to a cent. He even consented to let Dollikins feed old Adam every day, whether he worked or not.

Dollikins, with her lavish nature, could little understand the effort all this cost the old man, but she grew fond of him as he slowly improved under her care. He never spoke harshly to her now, and they went often after drift-wood together.

One morning in summer, as they sat upon the rocks, she told him that Miss Bradley liked him very much now. "And did you know," she exclaimed, "that the first time your andirons were scoured, Miss Bradley did it herself with her own lily-white hands?"

"Sho!" he said, and looked wonderfully pleased; but suddenly his face darkened a little, and he added, "But she's

dressing up too much. Three hunderd won't last long. Then where be ye?"

"Dressing up!" she said reproachfully. "That poor girl hasn't had a new dress for about two years till now, and this one Aunt Maria sent her. She sent me one, too, but I won't have mine made up till I see through her plans. That Aunt Maria is laying a trap for somebody, and Miss Bradley is going to walk into it some day."

"What do ye mean by a trap?"

"I know if she could get her to go there, she wouldn't let her come home again. She wanted her to go there, and have her dress made in the latest style. Wasn't that a good trap for Miss Bradley? Any way, she almost went into it. You know she does love good clothes, because she is pretty and stylish."

"Don't ye call yerself as good-looking as Mary Annie?"

"Why, no! I've got freckles."

"Handsome is that handsome does."

"O, yes! that's very well for talk; but she is handsome, and does handsome, beside."

"It ain't my place to advise, but you and your mother are standing in Mary Annie's light. 'Tain't right, and she won't thank you for it when she's a woman."

"I don't know what you mean."

"She would go live with her rich uncle if your mother and you only said, 'Ye better do it.' But ye keep planning to keep her here. Always keep on the right side of a relation that's got anything to leave."

"Do you think Uncle John ought to have Marianna just because he is rich and we are poor?"

"Sartain, I do."

She rubbed her hand quickly over her eyes, and looked over the water.

"Ye ain't been brought up right, and ye'll have to suffer for it. What if your mother was dead, and ye found yerself starving, Mistress Dollikins?"

He had no doubt she would say, "I should go to you;" but she said, "If my mother was dead, I would just as soon starve, and Marianna would, too. Now don't talk any more about such horrible things. I'm going to help mother before long. Perhaps I shall take in sewing — no, I hate to sew. Perhaps I shall have hens and chickens, and sell eggs."

"Why, ye ain't got hens!"

"Haven't you seen the nice old hen Miss Stacy gave Marianna for making a cap?"

"No; but I was after the notion that I heered ye callin', or feedin' somethin' at the back door, t' other morning."

"It was my hen; Marianna handed her right over to me because she can't care for such things; and I shall buy a half-dozen duck's eggs, and a half-dozen hen's eggs, and set her."

He laughed softly.

"What are you laughing at?"

"I wouldn't do it."

"Why not?"

"Chances air ag'in ye."

"I hate an old person that's always discouraging a young person."

"Tut, tut, Mistress Dollikins; have a little sense. I know yer fancies, and I don't want ye to expect new gowns out of an old hen."

"I don't expect at first to make much, but after a time — well, you will see! I shall have part ducks, because I like ducks best; I like to see them waddle, and I think they know more than hens. I don't believe there is anything that can walk, and hold up its head, that knows as little as a hen — except a rooster. Just as soon as I raise a rooster and five hens, I shall name them Deacon Moody's family. Don't you know how the deacon struts up the aisle in church, and his

wife and four daughters mincing behind him just as meek as hens?"

"I ain't a-laughin' at ye; I don't poke fun at my neighbors."

"How good you are!"

"Ye makes too much fun, Dollikins; it's yer worst failin'."

"Indeed, Mr. Perkins!"

She had been hurt by his opinion of Marianna's going away, and the little discussion on hens had not encouraged her so much as she had hoped. "I must go home," she said abruptly. "You can stay as long as you please. I should think such a good man as you are would like to sit down here alone and look up into the heavens."

"Wait a minute," he said, not heeding her words. "I've been wanting to ask ye something, Dollikins, but I ain't had the chance." He looked along the desolate shore, to see if any one was within hearing. "Tell me, do the town folks know about the three hunderd? Yes, yes! of course they do. Land, how I hate gossips!"

"Mr. Perkins, you don't believe your own nephew would tell, do you?"

"No, no! not Jack. Land o' liberty! Jack is as proud as if he come over in the Mayflower! But you and Mary Annie ain't got any o' my blood in ye."

Indignation shone in her eyes, but she arose calmly enough and said, "Good-by, Mr. Perkins!"

"Where ye goin' to?"

"Home."

"Goin' to leave me here?"

She stopped suddenly, then began to walk away, saying, "No, I won't talk to you; I haven't lost my temper since we turned over the new leaf."

"Hold on, ye pepper-box; I want to tell ye somethin'."

"I shouldn't think you would want to speak to me," she called over her shoulder.

"Well, I do. I never thought you'd say anything about it, but Mary Annie — why, land, who wouldn't in Mary Annie's shoes?"

"Marianna wouldn't, in anybody's shoes."

"Well, now, you sit down here. I want to tell ye somethin'."

She sat down upon a rock near where she stood.

"What I wanted to say, I would a leetle rather even the fishes wouldn't hear." So he went and sat beside her. "Say, when did ye see Jack last?"

"When you were sick."

"Did he come to see me?"

"He came to ask how you were."

"Did he seem sorry I was sick, d'ye think?"

"Not very."

"He left without a word to me; did ye know that?"

"Yes."

"He only waited to see if I was going to die; did ye know that?"

She was silent.

"What do you guess that Bluff's worth, Dollikins?"

"Nothing; it's the homeliest place on the coast."

"Lawyer Weston don't think so."

"Bob Weston? Good deal he knows! He'd have a picnic right here, between these rocks, when the tide was coming in."

"Maybe he ain't much on picnics, but he has been buying pretty sharp lately, and he offered me three thousand dollars for the Bluff."

"Why don't you sell it?"

The old man looked disappointed. "That Bluff has been in the hands of the Perkinses ever since the time of the Indians."

"They haven't improved it much, have they?" she said absently.

He went back to his old seat, and began gathering up the

drift-wood they had dropped there. "I expected," he said, as she went to help him, "to give ye a nice surprise, but ye're too high and mighty to-day."

They walked home without exchanging many words, and she did not see him again until she went to set his table for supper; for since his sickness she or her sister had set his table and prepared his humble meals. And so tidy did everything look that the old man often declared he was forced to put on his best coat with the brass buttons, "to be in keeping with things."

Dollikins was not very social that evening while she was setting the table and preparing his supper. He could not help feeling that he had offended her. Just as she was going out she said, "Marianna made that Swiss cheese, and she sent it to you."

"Then you didn't tell her what I said?"

"How do you know?" she asked, without a smile.

"She wouldn't be sending me cheese, if you'd told."

"Yes, she would, just as soon."

"But ye didn't tell her?"

"No, I didn't."

He looked satisfied. "I shall do something for ye yet, Dollikins. Ye've done well by me."

"I'm tired of it," she said with more truth than courtesy. "Not that you haven't done awfully well, Mr. Perkins, but" —

"No; don't say ye're tired doing for me, not to-day; it's an unlucky time to say so; ye ought to wait, and say it later on."

"I don't mean the dishes, or getting your meals; but here it is summer, and I always have a good deal of fun in the summer, and I don't want to feel that I've got a mission."

"What do ye mean by got a mission? What ye fretting 'bout — the heathen? I'll give ye a silver ten-cent piece to put in the box next Sunday for the heathen, though I believe in keeping your money in your own country."

"Mr. Perkins, you are too funny! I don't want ten cents for the heathen; but do you mean to say that you have forgotten that I took you for my mission? Of course mother and Marianna had to help, but don't you see what a good, generous man you are now — that is, generous compared with what you used to be?"

"So I be; but it has gone far enough now; ye needn't try to make me wasteful."

"I wish I could."

"Now ye're gettin' wicked, like ye used to be."

"I don't care. I wish you would do something before you die to make all the people in this place say you are not a

miser. You are not very stingy now, and I want them to know it before you die."

He leaned forward in his great chair, and his shrewd eyes looked into her face suspiciously. All the pleasant light had faded out of his thin face. "I hope ye ain't countin' on my death for anythin', Mistress Dollikins."

"No; it won't do any good after you are dead. No matter what we say after you are dead, people won't believe us; but why can't you do something great, and make everybody think you are not what you used to be? Everybody says you will never change, and when I say you have changed, and are no stingier than almost any one, they laugh at me."

"Sho! What do you care?"

"I do care."

"Lawyer Weston wouldn't laugh."

"Bob Weston?"

"Yes."

"He isn't all the town, is he? Besides, he wants to buy the Bluff, you said; of course he would be polite. What I want is, to have everybody know that you are different from what you used to be."

"I don't know what ye're driving at. I can't believe that ye're a deep one, Dollikins."

"Oh! but I am. I used to think about this as long ago as when you were sick; that was in March, and now it is the last of June."

"You were plotting then to get a little something out of me, eh?"

She nodded.

A dark frown slowly settled on his face, then he muttered, impatiently, "It's done, and I won't undo it. Jack stayed round till he found I wasn't going to die, but you, Dollikins, you wouldn't let me die like a pauper — but — but I don't want ye to be looking forward to my death."

"You don't think I want you to die because I said what I did, do you?" she asked, with an astonished air. "I only want you to show everybody here that you don't mind spending money."

"Ye're a wasteful critter, Dollikins, but you can't help it, maybe; and mind now, I don't say I will ever do it, but what was it ye wanted me to give ye?"

"Give me!" she exclaimed, with round eyes.

"Yes; ain't ye wanting something?"

"No, sir; and if you do it for me, or think for one minute that it is for me, don't you do it."

"For Mary Annie, maybe."

She had been holding her head very proudly, but it drooped a little, and she said, "I can see now that it might look to you as if I asked you for us; but I never thought so before, and I thought — I only thought that it was something that everybody would see, and they would have to say that you had changed."

She seated herself upon the lounge, and placed her elbow on her knee, her chin in her hand, and mused with a troubled face.

"Why don't ye speak out?" he said; "ye never used to be afraid o' nothing."

"I'm not afraid; but it doesn't seem the same as it did; it doesn't seem as good an idea as it did, because" —

"Why don't ye tell me what ye want?"

"I wanted you to paint the house."

"Paint the house!" He laughed at the absurdity of the idea. "Gettin' proud, ain't ye?"

"There! I knew you'd say that; and I never thought of it being anything for us. I only thought that it would be something that everybody would see as they went by, and it would show that you spent money now."

He laughed, and said she was sly. She did not resent this, as she was in deep thought.

"I have it now!" she cried triumphantly; "nothing to do with Marianna, or me, or anybody but you. You can paint the barn! You can have red eaves — that will cost a lot — and it will look as well as Mr. Weston's; and everybody will see it just as soon as they get to the hill? Will you do it — will you?

"No, I won't; but I'm mighty glad that it wasn't nothing to do with my death."

"With your death?" she said, in a puzzled tone.

"Yes; I thought ye was looking for somethin' when I died; but I ain't forgot ye; come here;" and he drew a long envelope from his pocket. "Can ye keep a secret? Here, take that, and never look at it till I'm in the churchyard."

"What is it?"

"It's a present for ye."

"Why can't I look at it?"

"Not till I'm in the churchyard," he said impatiently.

"Do you mean when you're dead?" with a little shudder.

"That's jest what I mean."

"I don't want it." She spoke firmly.

"Take it," he said, almost gently; "but don't look at it, nor say ye have it, for the gossips will say ye planned for it."

But she would not touch it.

"TAKE IT," HE SAID, ALMOST GENTLY, BUT SHE WOULD NOT TOUCH IT.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TWO VETERANS.

I WISH he hadn't mentioned dying," said Dollikins to herself the next day, as she sat on the shore. "I wish people would never talk about dying — I hate it! Of course when people get so old that they can't turn over in bed it's all very well for them to be resigned; but Mr. Perkins isn't so old as that yet, and now that he is beginning to live like a decent person he ought to be glad that he isn't dead. Whew! who's that coming! Well, if it isn't Lord Archie on horseback!"

It was indeed Miss Stacy's sister's grandson mounted on his aunt's old horse. When he saw Dollikins he touched his cap, but galloped by without a word. She turned and watched him nearly out of sight, when suddenly the horse settled into a trot which threatened to dislocate every bone in the boy's body, and in a few minutes he turned about and came back to where she was standing.

"Excuse me for passing you, Miss Dollikins," he said, quite out of breath, "but I had been all the way from the

village getting that horse into a gallop, and I wasn't going to lose it."

"We have some pretty fine horses in this town," she said, as he dismounted by her side. "Did you ever try old Foster's Liddy? Mrs. Foster calls her Lady Jane Grey, but you can't buy an old horse that everybody in town has hired for forty years, and called Liddy, and then expect people to call her Lady Jane Grey."

"I remember that horse," said Archie, laughing; "I drove her to the beach one day with Aunt Stacy; she's a big-boned gray mare, isn't she? Stumbles like sin!"

"That's the one!" exclaimed Dollikins; "I asked Mrs. Foster why Mr. Foster didn't shoe her ears, for she walks on them half the time."

"Pretty good idea, Miss Dollikins."

"Mrs. Foster didn't like it."

"Perhaps you forgot to call the nag Lady Jane Grey."

"I called her Liddy Jane Grey. But she's better than Mr. Scott's Webster. Did you ever hire him? He will sit down right in the middle of the road and meditate; and when he gets up, if you don't say, 'I still live,' he will sit down again."

"Really, Miss Dollikins?"

"'Pon honor."

"It's a good thing to get posted on the horses about here before you hire. I don't suppose there is a positively easy horse in the village." Archie rubbed his slim leg as if he remembered one that was not quite satisfactory.

"O, yes, there is; Mr. Skinner's bowing mare is easy as a cradle after you get used to her limp."

"Do you ride often?"

"I ride old Adam sometimes."

"That's the miser's nag?"

"That's Mr. Perkins's horse."

"Old Christopher could beat him."

"Well, he is older than Christopher; but I doubt if Christopher could beat him."

"Old Christopher struck these shores in 1492."

"And we can't tell much about the Garden of Eden, because the flood washed it away. Adam is the oldest horse in the world."

"And the flood washed his bones pretty clean of flesh, too, didn't it?" asked Archie, with a grin.

"You wouldn't dare to race Christopher's fat against old Adam's bones," said Dollikins, with rising color.

"What makes you think so?"

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"Will you do it — say, will you?"

"Who will ride Adam? Will you?"

"Of course I will."

"Agreed," said Archie coolly.

"From here to Betton's Bluff?" said Dollikins, her eyes sparkling.

"Yes."

"You'd better let Christopher lie down on the sand while I go for Adam," she cried, as she hastened away.

A few minutes later Mr. Perkins was surprised to see Dollikins going towards the shore on old Adam. He opened the window and shouted, "Where ye going with that horse?" but received no answer, and in an instant Dollikins was out of sight.

As she reined old Adam in beside Christopher, Archie exclaimed, "You'll get thrown, Miss Dollikins! You can't ride a man's saddle."

"It's this saddle or none," she returned. "If you back out now old Adam has beaten."

"I don't want you to go racing with me and get killed."

"It wouldn't be your fault, Lord Archie."

"But you are the only live thing in the place, and I should have to come here just the same if you were killed."

"Do you have to come here?"

"Certainly; because Aunt Stacy hasn't any grandchildren."

"I wouldn't if I didn't want to come," declared Dollikins.

"I have to mind my grandmother."

"Haven't you any mother?"

"No." Archie answered the question cheerfully.

"Look at Adam!" cried Dollikins. For Adam was tossing his old head as if anxious to start.

"Can't you wake Christopher up?"

"I am ready," said Archie. "One, two, three — go!" and he lashed the old discoverer, as if Betton's Bluff was a new spot which he had never seen. But Adam's long rest, or the regular supply of food which he had received since the miser's illness, had renewed his youth. When he heard the lumbering gallop of Miss Stacy's old horse behind him, he laid back his ears and in a moment Archie saw Dollikins far ahead of him.

"Throw your foot over or you will be killed!" he shouted, but Dollikins heard nothing. Betton's Bluff was reached and passed, and still old Adam sped on with Christopher far behind.

When Dollikins returned Archie was dismounting. "Go and drink some salt water, you fat fool," he murmured good-naturedly, slapping Christopher's side.

"A good fair, square, out-and-out beat, wasn't it?" cried Dollikins. "Oh! I am so glad. Not so much to beat you, although that was fun, but I want Mr. Perkins to see that it pays to feed a horse. I couldn't hold him, you know, truly. I suppose you think I whipped him, but I didn't one bit. He just tore ahead and all I did was to stick on."

"I was so afraid you couldn't stick on that I couldn't urge Christopher at all," said Archie solemnly. "I was so paralyzed with fear that I couldn't lay on the whip worth a cent."

"Want to try it again?" she asked.

"O, no! I don't want to see old Adam's bones fall apart."

"You mean you don't want to walk home."

"I don't consider it patriotic to speak in that way of Christopher."

"Then you speak a little more respectfully of Adam."

"Adam is a fossil. Not an American fossil, either."

"If his skeleton stood in the Natural History Museum to-day, and they would let him out long enough, he would beat old Christopher out and out."

"I suppose Adam will have to claim this race," said Archie, "but I am afraid it will kill Christopher. I don't suppose he was ever beaten before in his life, and it will be terrible news to Aunt Stacy, too."

"What do you do for-fun at Miss Stacy's? Honest, now."

He shook his head.

"What does that mean — that you can't tell?"

"I wouldn't tell. Aunt Stacy's got her eye on you for something. I can't tell what we do for fun there."

"What do you mean?"

"No, I must not give my great-aunt away. Tell me, why didn't your sister go to Mr. Bradley's? Aunt Stacy told me and Grandmamma that she was going there to live."

"She didn't go," said Dollikins shortly.

"Is she well?" asked Archie politely.

"No," said Dollikins earnestly, "she is not a bit well. She coughs sometimes, and mother is worried all the time about her."

"Perhaps she is playing it on your mother."

"What do you mean?" There was a ring of indignation in Dollikins's tone.

"I don't suppose girls would do such things," he explained, "but I didn't know but she coughed to get away to your uncle's. When Grandmamma wants me to come down here to see Aunt Stacy in the winter, I always get up a cough, and then I don't have to go; I cough to keep away from here, and I thought maybe your sister coughed to get away."

"Would it hurt you to come here if you had a cough?" Dollikins asked anxiously.

"Why, yes! it might kill me."

"Honestly, now, would it hurt you any to live here if you had a cough?"

"I think ten days — allowing that five of them were rainy — would see me under the daisies, Miss Dollikins."

"I wish you would stop your nonsense. I don't care how soon you go under the daisies; but did any doctor ever tell you that you couldn't come here if you had a cough? That's what I want to know."

"Yes; I have got our doctor to say so three times."

"Then Miss Bradley must go away," she thought.

"But now that I know you," said he, "perhaps I can stand it better." He smiled graciously, but she allowed the compliment to pass unnoticed.

"This is the healthiest place in the world," she declared; "I never was sick in my life."

"You and old Adam are very tough."

"Thank you."

"Oh! don't mention it."

She felt irritated, and gave Adam a jerk because he wou move about. She was still mounted, while Archie sat upon the

sand, and Christopher stood at a little distance, his head hanging down and his dull eye upon his conqueror. All the pleasure had faded suddenly out of Dollikins's mind at the mention of the old place being bad for a cough. It was just what her uncle had said. It was what her mother had tried to make Dollikins believe, but now it had come from an entirely disinterested quarter. She did not believe the story that Archie had ever had a cough; she understood all his nonsense, but the truth remained that the doctor had said that even the village was a bad place for one who had a cough. It was more than the want of money that would drive Marianna away from the Bluff. Perhaps she would die if she staid! Her sister's pale face and gentle smile came suddenly to her mind, and Dollikins's eyes grew moist.

"Perhaps Marianna will have to go away," she said gently, bending down from the high horse toward the boy. "Do you believe it is a bad place here for her?"

"O, yes! your aunt means to work your sister's cough for all it's worth when the cold weather comes. I heard her talking to Grandmamma about it."

"I shouldn't think your grandmother would listen to her."

"Oh! Grandmamma will listen to anybody. She's very polite."

"Has your mother been dead a long time?" Dollikins asked the question almost timidly.

"She died when I was a baby. I never saw her. Grandmamma had seven portraits painted of her — and no two look like the same woman; so after I have been looking at them all it is kind of bewildering; I feel sometimes as if I had had seven mothers, and sometimes it makes me feel as if I never had any mother at all."

"I should decide which one looked the most like her, and that one I would keep in my room all the time. I would know how my mother looked."

"How can I decide when I never saw her? The one that Grandmamma says is the best, Grandpapa says is the worst; and the very worst-looking one of all Aunt Stacy says is just like her. I wouldn't give a rap for one of them. When I was a little shaver, a boy struck me on the head with a bat, and I had a fever or something, and I dreamed that my mother came, and just put her hand on my head where it was cut open, and I went right to sleep, and the pain stopped. I dreamed it, you know, but she didn't look like either one of the seven portraits."

"I believe that is the way she really looked," said Dollikins.

He looked languidly up at her out of the corner of his eye to see if she had spoken in earnest. At the same moment a thin, shrill voice from the cliff above them cried:

"What ye ben doin' with that horse, Mistress Dollikins?"

"He beat!" cried Dollikins. "Old Adam beat Miss Stacy's Christopher!"

"Fetch him back," called the old man.

"Will you come up?" she asked, as Archie mounted Christopher.

"No, thank you, I must go home; my dear great-aunt will be getting lonely."

"Now, don't look so black," began Dollikins as she rode into the barn, the old man following.

"If ye'd asked me I should have let ye had him, Dollikins; ye might have asked me for him."

"Miss Stacy's sister's grandson came along on Miss Stacy's old nag — you know her Christopher? — and began to run Adam."

"That boy-gal?"

"He's good enough when you know him. Well, he said so much I just offered to race old Adam's bones against Christopher's fat"—

"And ye licked him!" said the old man with a grim smile.

"Adam was past Betton's Bluff before old Columbus had lifted a foot out of the sand! I never touched a whip to him. All I did was to cling on."

"Good! and yet old maid Stacy called on me once to advise me to feed my horse. I told her I'd race with her any day. Ye're sure he had her horse? If I thought he had any other horse, I'd scold ye well for takin' Adam without leave."

"Don't you suppose I know old Christopher Stacy?"

"Of course ye do," and the old man rubbed his lank jaw with satisfaction.

"You would have felt pretty bad if Adam hadn't beaten, wouldn't you, Mr. Perkins?"

"Ye didn't mount without a stick, did ye?"

"O, no! I had a stick."

"Then ye wouldn't let that silly go by you, would ye? Of course ye would beat him."

"Six months ago old Adam couldn't have done it."

"H'ity-t'ity! now don't spoil all ye've done."

"He couldn't, Mr. Perkins. He has grown strong because he has been fed every day regularly."

"Give me the key back. I'll look arter him now."

"No, sir; you are not well enough yet. Besides, it is better for me to feed him."

"Ye're feedin' him too high."

"O, Mr. Perkins! if my taking him out to-day will starve him to-morrow, I shall wish that he had been beaten! He hasn't any too much flesh yet, has he?"

"No; his feedin's all gone to sperrits."

"And won't you let him have either flesh or spirits?" cried Dollikins. "Are you going to be stingy again, after all?" and she rushed out of the barn into the house.

CHAPTER VII.

BACKSLIDING.

MR. PERKINS is backsliding, Dollikins," said Mrs Bradley, laughing. "While you were gone the store boy brought the soup meat that you ordered, and Mr. Perkins told him to take it back."

"But you didn't let him do it, did you?" said Dollikins anxiously.

"No, no, she didn't," said Marianna; "but, Dollikins, I would not try any longer to make anything of him. He is too old. You are wearing yourself out for nothing; he is a born miser; God made him so."

"God never made him so!" cried Dollikins. "He made himself a miser. He is going to take the key of the barn back, and Adam has just beaten Christopher Stacy, too!" and Dollikins gave them a vivid description of the race.

"Dollikins Bradley! did you ride on Mr. Perkins's old saddle?" exclaimed Marianna.

"I hadn't time to send to Boston for Aunt Maria's, Miss

Bradley. Yes; I rode on the old straddle-saddle, but I rode genteelly until I was out of Lord Archie's sight; then Adam ran so hard I had to throw my foot over and cling for my life. I forgot you, Miss Bradley, and Lord Archie; but when Adam calmed down a little I became respectable as soon as possible. Oh! old Adam paid back all I ever gave him, and I will have that key back to-day! Where is the meat?"

"Wait," said Marianna. "Listen a moment; this is a good time to drop that disgusting old man. He is ungrateful as well as disgusting. You have worked hard, and here he is right back again where you begun."

"He isn't; is he, mother?"

"No, indeed," said the widow, "but he soon would be if left to himself. Now, if you can't leave him in his own company without his backsliding, don't you think you have undertaken too much, Dollikins? You shall do just as you please about it. It is quite natural that the habits of years should be stronger than those of months. But haven't you undertaken too much?"

"Oh! smile away, you and Marianna, too, I don't care," said Dollikins. "Where is the meat? He shall have it."

"It's down the well with our meat," said Marianna, "but I wouldn't go near him again. He is too mean, Doll. Can't

you see that while he was sick it was easy enough for you to manage him, but he is getting strong again, and he will soon be just the same as ever. His sending the meat back was reason enough for your dropping him entirely. Leave him to himself, and see what he will do."

"I don't know what to do!" moaned Dollikins. "I might just as well own that I am discouraged." Then suddenly her old familiar spirit of dauntless energy took possession of her, and she said, "I will not give up! He shall be decent yet."

When Dollikins left the barn, she left the key in the door, and the old man took it and put it in his pocket.

He was pleased that Adam had beaten Christopher, but begrudged the food which had helped to rouse his ambition; for the miser's mind was beginning to work again in the old and familiar channels. It is not strange that he walked away from the house that held Mistress Dollikins; for at the very moment that the spirit of perseverance had taken possession of her, the demon of avarice had returned to claim the miser.

"I'm glad she didn't take it," he murmured, as he wandered along the lonely shore. "A nice gal, and I'll not forget her, but I ain't a nabob, and she ain't going to drive me to ruin. Them gewgaws her and Mary Annie hev stuck up round the

room — why, they look pretty enough, but they cost something, and like enough she bought 'em with the money I give her for food. Not that she ain't honest; but she's wasteful. Her grandmother was proud and wasteful, too. It's in the blood. Eatin' three times a day is bad for the health, and I shouldn't blame Providence ef it took all a man's property that would do it. I ain't goin' to eat no more at night; ef she gets me any supper I won't eat it, nor pay for it. My bein' sick was awful costly; it will take months ter get even with it. I'm puttin' my best coat on so often I won't hev nothin' left ter be buried in."

While the miser entertained these thoughts the sun went down amid the most lavish splendor; a soft breeze floated over the water to cool his heated brow. The twilight lingered as long for him, and left him as reluctantly, as though he had been a monarch; and through this fading glory now and then a belated cliff swallow darted to his nest. Through his handmaid Nature, God murmured, "I give!" but the miser thinking only of the one person in the world who was ready to help him, murmured, "I will take it back. She ain't got nothin' yet, nor she won't get it!"

It was dark when he came back to the house. He was weary and hungry. "She will have it ready, but I will not eat

it," he muttered as he opened his door, and, greatly to his surprise, found the room perfectly dark. He stumbled to the fireplace and fumbled about for the little china match-box which Dollikins had given him; but he could not find it. This was the first time since his illness that Dollikins had not lighted his lamp. At first he felt it like a slight, but his feeling quickly changed, and he thought, "Well, well, it is a good thing; and if the table is set I will eat no supper."

Suddenly in the darkness his hand came in contact with an unfamiliar object. It was an old sardine-box, and it contained matches. A curious feeling came over him. He felt as if he moved in a dream, for he remembered before the new order of things, before the dispensation of Dollikins, that he had kept his matches in a sardine-box. He tried to strike a match, but his old hand trembled. The match broke and fell into the fireplace. His long walk had wearied him, his long fast had made him weak. He left the room, crossed the little entry and knocked at the widow's door.

"My matches don't ketch very well," he said to Marianna, who opened the door.

"Don't they?" Marianna said pleasantly; "let me get you some dry ones."

Seeing Dollikins deep in a book, he said, "Ye hev looked

arter the lamp so long, Mistress Dollikins, I couldn't find myself in the dark."

His tone was half reproachful.

"I thought you wouldn't need it any more," said Dollikins carelessly; "it was our lamp, you know, and I brought it home."

"I ain't findin' fault," he returned; "I rather not be beholden to ye."

"That's what I thought," said Dollikins, and she returned to her book, and the old man to his room.

The sight of the bright, pleasant room so near, and Dollikins's indifference, for the moment weakened the miser in his determination.

"I believe I will eat something to-night, 'long as she's got it; I'll be bound to pay for it, if it ain't my victuals; but to-morrow — to-morrow"— he struck a match and lighted the tallow dip which he found over the fireplace, and as the dull yellow flame sullenly and slowly lighted the room, the miser started back in astonishment. How familiar and yet unfamiliar everything appeared. Familiar because well-remembered. Unfamiliar because no longer cherished.

The old chair which he had left with a pretty and tidy cover, now stood in dirty rags. The bed, a few hours ago so

white, both sheets and coverlet, now covered with the ragged counterpane which he remembered too well. The table robbed of its cloth, held only a few old dishes heaped up as in days not long gone by. Even the lounge and windows stripped completely. The "gewgaws" which had troubled him as he walked upon the shore, no longer met his eye. It was a miser's home, and the man who looked upon it — was he a miser still?

He drew near the table, but touched nothing. Suddenly he blew out the light, and threw himself upon the bed.

The following morning Dollikins saw him go to the barn, and in a short time he drove out, and as he turned to drive away, she ran to the door and said, "Good-morning! Where are you going?"

He returned the good-morning curtly, but did not satisfy her farther. But her mother told her he was going down to the island to look after his hay.

"And he won't be home before noon, will he?" whispered Dollikins.

This her mother could not answer, but when he was out of sight, Dollikins said: "Well, we all have to run risks."

The morning passed and the miser did not come back. When he returned he found Dollikins in his room, which had

suddenly changed back to the room he had left the afternoon before; but if he felt any surprise this time he gave no sign of it as he sat down in his big chair. The table was prepared as usual now, and the old man could not help smelling the dinner. After an awkward silence Dollikins exclaimed: "Why don't you say something?"

"Oh! monkeys can't live without their tricks, I s'pose."

He was hungry, and the sight of the dinner made him answer good-naturedly in spite of himself.

"And jackasses can't live without eating, Mr. Perkins; if the jackass will eat, the monkey will give up her tricks. I have a splendid receipt for dumplings, Mr. Perkins; it costs less to have them than it does to go without. Now, have a good dinner, and I will come in after mine and see how you like it. Poor man! you have not had anything fit to eat since yesterday noon, and you can't go as you used to since you have become accustomed to living respectably."

"Here, here," he shouted as she hastened towards the door; "where did you get this meat?"

"That meat is your own; you paid for it; you need not be afraid to eat it."

"I told you yesterday morning that I wanted that last dollar back."

"I couldn't get it all back, and so I didn't give you any. You know they won't take meat back after you have bought it, and I should like to see you get five cents away from old Mrs. Scott after you had paid it for turnips. You have no idea how a stingy old woman holds on to five cents!"

After this last exclamation she darted out the door, and the old man began eating with an appetite sharpened by a long fast. If the miser's demon had been shrewd, he would have forced the old man to have it out with his young guardian before dinner. When Dollikins returned the miser sat with his head dropped upon his breast fast asleep. Nor did he waken while she cleared the table and put things in order. When he opened his eyes and looked through that comfortable haze which surrounds old men after a good dinner, she was gone, but he noted with a sleepy satisfaction that nothing was missing from the room. Even the "gewgaws" which he had condemned, he was glad to see back in their places.

"Yes, yes," he murmured, "a jackass can't live without eating, but he needn't eat his head off to please a monkey. If she can get dinners like that for what I give her, she can get them good enough for half the money — yes, half the money! She thinks she has beaten me out and out, but I'll show her, the vixen! I'll" —

"Were the dumplings good?"

He turned towards the door. Even a miser could not be so stingy as to refuse to return the grin which Dollikins gave her mission. And somewhere under the hard surface the old man possessed a sense of humor which Dollikins had often used as a lever to raise him to something better. She came in and put the china she had washed into the cupboard. As she buttoned the cupboard door, he said:

"Ain't it about time, little gal, that you and me had a reck'nin'? What ye got left of that last dollar I give ye?"

"About seventy cents."

"When ye talk o' money, never say 'bout; ye must know to a cent. But I ain't findin' fault — I ain't findin' fault. Ye've done fust-rate considerin' yer wasteful natur, and I won't bother ye any more; I'll take care of everything myself arter this."

"You want the seventy cents back?" She spoke slowly, and in a low tone.

"Yes, yes; ye might hand over what's left."

"You would rather be *Miser* Perkins than *Mister* Perkins, would you?"

"Never mind what folks say, it can't hurt ye, Mistress Dollikins."

"It can if it's the truth."

"Sho!"

"But you shall not be a miser!" She took a resolute step towards him. "When I didn't like you at all, I was bound to make you spend money until people stopped calling you — miser. Now, I like you! and if you want to go back to your dirty old room and starving ways, I won't let you. I bought all the meat there was in that stew for nine cents, and if you hadn't gone without your supper last night, and had eaten a decent breakfast this morning, why, there would have been enough left for your dinner to-morrow; so you see it doesn't pay to starve yourself one day, because you eat more the next. Every cent I have spent for you I have put down in a book; and it is so little, that if you should die, I should burn the book right up, for fear somebody would see it, and know how little you have spent! Now, I like you, and you shall not backslide!"

"Now, I like you!" These words were the only ones of the long harangue that reached the old man; and they sank into his withered heart like dew upon parched ground. There was a time when he had had affection, but his old demon had driven every thought save that of money, out of his mind. This day was to see the final struggle. Dollikins put on her whole armor, and met the demon boldly. Many a time when

she thought she had gained the victory, he reappeared with a new force of which she had not dreamed; but she conquered at last, and although he often came and tormented the old man in her absence, never did he dare to enter the little black house again while she was in it.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOLLIKINS BECOMES MERCENARY.

A YEAR passed with little change in the small, black house, except Marianna's going away. All through the winter she had had a troublesome cough, and the doctor had said, imperatively, that she must leave the sea-coast; and toward the spring she had gone to spend a few weeks only with Uncle John; but now it was summer, and she had not come back.

One morning after Dollikins had prepared the breakfast at home, and then for Mr. Perkins, she sat down at her own little chamber window with the express purpose of being miserable.

She looked down into the garden, where a few early summer flowers were doing their best to look gay, and saw the old yellow hen that Miss Stacy had given Marianna for making her last cap.

She had named this hen Maria, because, in spite of her glorious prophecy in regard to her, she had always been broodless. And Dollikins would gladly have made a stew of

her, if she could have found the courage to ask any one to kill her. But Maria became immediately a member of the family, and Dollikins said she often behaved so much like the person for whom she was named that it would seem like cutting off the head of a relative to kill her; and the result was that Maria added a trifle to Dollikins's care, without yielding the anticipated income.

"If Miss Bradley does not come to-day I shall believe she is chained in the cellar, or in the attic, at Uncle John's house," thought Dollikins, as she leaned on the window-sill and looked down at Maria, who had scratched a comfortable place in the gravel-walk to lie down in.

When the old hen settled into the hole, and partly closed her eyes, her satisfaction was too much for Dollikins. "You old maid, you!" she exclaimed, "why didn't you have some chickens? All you ever think of is yourself!" and seizing a pitcher of water she threw half of the contents at the poor biddy, who clucked a little, shook her feathers, then appeared to think it was an accident, and settled down again.

"It won't do any good to drown poor Maria. I must make up my mind to do something better than that," and she went to the small glass which hung over her dressing-table, and looked into it.

"Fourteen years old to-day," she remarked to the frank face which looked out at her.

She began to unbraid her hair — for Dollikins's curls had gone into a heavy braid — and then, with great care, she coiled it high upon her head, and fastened it there with some of Marianna's hair-pins.

After looking at herself for some time, she appeared satisfied with her head, and proceeded to put on one of her sister's dresses. While she was studying the effect of the back breadths, which was not quite satisfactory, she saw in the glass two men coming toward the house, with a long ladder.

"Can it be," she thought, "that Mr. Perkins is going to have the barn painted? Oh! I hope not. That would cost so much that he would not spend any more for a year!" and she ran down to the old man's room, forgetful of the dignity she intended to assume with Marianna's dress and hair-pins.

She found him sitting by the window, watching the two men.

"Are you going to have the barn painted?" she asked breathlessly.

"The barn? No; I am going to have the house painted. Hain't ye pestered me long enough?"

"I'm afraid you can't afford it."

"Nice time to think o' that! Didn't ye say I must do it, so everybody'd see it? Mind ye, I don't care who sees it. I only do it because ye wanted a surprise on yer birthday."

"I meant I wished Marianna would come home."

"Well, yer mother never made any fuss 'bout the house, and she keeps everything pretty trim. Of course I can't afford it, but you're the last one to know that."

"You can't afford it because you've got to hire a girl, Mr. Perkins."

"Hire a gal? What for?"

"I cannot work for nothing any more. If you can't pay me, I must do something; and if I have to do something else, why, I shall not be here, ready to help you when you want me. Of course, if you hire me, I shall do your washing, and you can make it as large as you please. I did almost half of our washing last week. I could do yours."

"That's what ye've got yer hair bobbed up for?"

"I am fourteen to-day, and I am going to do something. That is why my hair is up."

"Take it down, and don't think to work for me for money."

"You might as well pay me as anybody; and you must have somebody, and I must do something."

"Don't ask it."

"You couldn't get a servant girl to work as cheap as I would."

"Don't want ye."

"If you didn't have the house painted, couldn't you afford it?"

"No."

"Then perhaps I shall have to go away," was her reply.

SHE FOUND HIM SITTING BY THE WINDOW.

"Listen, Mistress Dollikins!" he said, almost fiercely. "A good many years ago I knew your Grandmother Bradley. A proud gal she was, too; and never mind why, but I hoped that I should live to see her pride brought low; but she never bowed her head till she bowed to Death. Many a time when I've seen ye wanting money, and working hard for yer bread right here in my house, I was glad, thinking of yer grandmother. But ye've done well by me — ye've done well by me. And can't ye see if I took ye for a hired gal — no, no! ye've got her blood, and ye look like,

her; but I'm too near the end for vengeance, and it's two generations off."

"Do you suppose my grandmother'd care if I worked for you? I wouldn't work for everybody."

"Dollikins," he replied, speaking slowly, "if a body could die twice, it would kill her."

She did not seem much moved by this remarkable statement. She watched the painters a few minutes, then said, as she turned from the window, "I care more for my mother than I do for my grandmother. I will work for you for fifty cents a week, Mr. Perkins."

She did not look as if she would make a very humble servant, as she raised her determined face to meet his.

"I don't want ye at any price. I tell ye, once for all, I'll never pay ye a cent."

"You don't suppose I want to take any money from you, do you? If we had any at all, I wouldn't take it from anybody. But I must do something to help mother, and who will do your work if I go away? You can't trust anybody else with your mother's china, can you?"

"Ye never asked for pay before. I don't guess ye'll have to work much longer for me." He opened an old writing-desk, and drew out the legal envelope she had refused to take

months before, and said, with a grim smile, "What do ye suppose that is?"

He turned it over, and she saw, written on the end of it, "Last Will and" — The next word was a long one, and she could not see it plainly. She had never seen a will, but she knew what the word meant.

"It's something about your death. Put it away."

Her face was troubled, and she put her hand upon his arm, as if she would lead him back to the old desk. He had never seen her so gentle before, and her long dress and coiled hair made her look womanly.

"I'll put it away if ye don't like the look of it, but I tell ye, it's all yours, Dollikins; the Bluff, and the house, and the barn, and Perkins's Island, and a neat little sum. If I didn't hear a word from Jack in a year, it was all going to ye, 'cept a mite, just to remind him that he had lost more than he got; and I ain't heard from him.

"But don't tell of it till I'm in the churchyard. If yer mother and Marianna knew it, the town would say ye all planned for it. Ye never did plan for it — not one of ye. Perhaps ye won't get it for a long time, but ye'll get it at last, Mistress Dollikins, ye'll get it at last, and I wanted ye to know it from me."

"Do you mean you are going to will me this house?"

"I have willed it to ye, and all the rest."

"For our own? Not pay any rent?"

"Yes; give it to ye. Don't ye know what willing means?"

"I don't believe mother would let me take it."

"How can she help it? I can do what I like with my own. Mind ye, don't tell her, nor Mary Annie, nor anybody. Let it surprise the town."

"If I have a house of my own when you die, whom will you give it to then — your nephew?"

"Where ye going to get a house before I die?"

"Perhaps when I'm married my husband will have one."

"Ye're trying to give me a long lease o' life, ain't ye, Dollikins?" and he put the paper back.

"You think I'm not very much obliged?" she said, as he sadly turned the key.

"Ye don't know the worth of it; but I don't like ye any the less for that; and maybe ye think ye'll have to wait a long time for it; but ye won't. I don't feel over and above strong to-day."

"Then it's all that nasty paint. I smelt it before those painters opened the paint-pots. I will send them away. If you don't feel well, you mustn't smell paint."

"No, no! let the painters alone. I want it done while the weather is fine."

"Won't Miss Bradley open her eyes some when she sees the house painted, Mr. Perkins?"

"When is she coming back?"

"I expect her to-day; but I have been expecting her every day for weeks."

"Maybe now they won't let her come."

"She must come, for I must see her to talk over what I'd better do. I will do something. Oh! how much I would rather you would give me fifty cents a week, and let me do all your work, than to give me the house after you are dead."

"Ye're as obstinate as an off-ox, and if ye knew the worth of that paper, I'd throw the whole thing in the fireplace."

"I don't think I'm obstinate, but I must do something to help now. You think I'm not proud, because I'm willing to be your hired girl; but I thought it wouldn't seem like being a servant if I took money from you, because I have worked so long, doing the same things that I should do for the fifty cents. I am wondering who will do everything for you if I should go away."

"Where ye going?"

"I don't know."

He smiled in a manner which provoked her.

She turned, and would have left him, but his next remark seemed to her like a challenge: "Ye have too high fancies, Mistress Dollikins."

"High fancies!" she repeated; "well, I must say, Mr. Perkins, that your fancies must be pretty low-down ones if you call asking to be a servant for fifty cents a week, high fancies!"

"Ye ain't took my meaning," he said, not sourly, as he often spoke to her when she first began to do for him; "I was thinking about yer going away, and the foolishness of looking fer Mary Annie to come back; and thinking about a hen-farm starting from one old hen just ready to die of old age, and all them little fancies that ye know can't really be — 'cause they ain't sense."

"Fancies!" she repeated again, indignantly, "and do you call wanting to raise hens, and expecting your own sister to come home, and grinding your poor brains almost out of your head thinking about going away to earn your living, because your mother is working herself to death — is that your idea of fancies? If it is, and it makes you open your eyes, I won't tell you what real fancies are, because they might scare you to death, Mr. Perkins."

"If yer'd been born a boy, Dollikins, ye'd made an awful smart preacher, or maybe yer would liked to go to Congress."

Mr. Perkins had not been born without an imagination; but his miserly nature had taught him to use everything very prudently. He had never been reckless even in fancy. But the last year he seemed to feel at times as he had felt when a child. He often found himself living over his uneventful childhood, and perhaps his imagination, that had grown rusty with nothing but sordid fancies to lighten it, began to grow brighter from contact with a youthful mind. But his wildest imaginings would probably have seemed very tame compared with those of the audacious Dollikins.

She was about to tell him that she probably would not have been either theologically or politically inclined, if she had been a boy, when one of the painters came to the window and handed her four letters. He said that he was in the post-office, and the postmistress told him there was quite a mail for Widow Bradley, and, as he was coming right up to Mr. Perkins's, he had brought the letters along.

"Four letters!" cried Dollikins. Never before had they received so many at once.

The old man eyed them suspiciously as Dollikins read the superscriptions.

"One is from Miss Bradley, and for me. Good-by, Mr. Perkins!"

"Why don't you read it here? I'd like to hear about Mary Annie."

She broke the seal, and read:

DEAR DOLLY:

Aunt Maria thinks it would make me more homesick to write to you, so I have not written you for a long time; but now we are to be a week at the new hotel, — only four miles from you by the shore, — that is not too far for you to walk, is it, dear? and I must see you! What does mother mean by writing I must stay? Do come, for I cannot go to you. Come to-morrow, if possible.

In great haste, your unhappy

MARIANNA.

"Four miles!" said Dollikins scornfully. "I could get there if it were ten miles, and I had to go through water up to my neck. Miss Bradley is a prisoner, Mr. Perkins! I have thought so for some time."

"I guess she's a willing prisoner."

"I scorn to answer you, Mr. Perkins!" and his would-be servant gathered up her letters and swept out of the room.

She did not find her mother at the front window sewing, and received no answer to her repeated calls. She thought she must have gone to the village for some machine twist

which she had asked Dollikins to get some time that day. She sat down and re-read Marianna's letter, and found that it was dated the day before, and she must start soon if she expected to spend any time with her sister, and get home before dark.

She decided to wear Marianna's dress, and leave her hair as it was. She did not feel quite satisfied with the overskirt, but there was no one in the house but Mr. Perkins, and if she had had confidence in his ability to drape her overdress, she would not have asked a favor of him after his lack of faith in Marianna's desire to come home.

She stopped in the garden to pick a few flowers, and the old hen clucked sociably.

"I've a good mind to stop and wring your neck and pull every feather out of you, Maria Bradley!" at the same time stepping over the hen in the path; but, stupid as old Maria was, she knew that nothing very alarming ever came of Dollikins's threats to her.

The old man saw her, and asked her if she thought of fetching Mary Annie home with her. She paid no attention, but walked quickly away, and in a moment was on the shore.

She had not walked very far, however, before she began to wish she had at least said good-by, or perhaps a very cool good-afternoon to Mr. Perkins, for he was good to want her to

have the house after he was dead, so her mother would not have to pay any rent. How comfortable that would be! She began to walk slowly.

"Yes, he is very good," she thought, and turned suddenly and walked back to the house.

He still sat at the open window. "I am going to see Miss Bradley, and perhaps she will come back with me. Good-by! If I am not home in time, mother will get your supper. I have pinned the letter on her cushion, but I wish you would tell her where I have gone."

"Oh! ye'll stick when ye get there, just like Mary Annie."

"I shall be back to-night. Good-by!" and she hurried away.

She found she could not walk as easily in Marianna's dress as in one of her own, but she was not very long in putting the four miles behind her.

She was not far from the new hotel when she saw a pony-phaeton coming toward her. It was driven by a young lady, and a man she well remembered sat perched up on a small seat behind. It was her Uncle John's scornful coachman.

The young lady had driven quite by before she saw that it was her sister.

"Miss Bradley!" she shouted, instinctively, for she felt

that this must be one of Marianna's Miss Bradley days. The pony stopped, and Dollikins was in her sister's arms.

"Why, you dear child, I did not know you!" sobbed Marianna; "how you have grown! How old you look! I knew I had been gone a long time, but I did not think it was so long as this."

Dollikins was on the point of owning up to the taking of the hair-pins and dress, but, looking up, she saw the immovable face of the lackey above them. No, she could not mention anything as common as borrowing hair-pins before him.

Marianna partly understood the look, and said, "Take the reins, Thomas; we want to walk a little. Are you very tired, Doll?" she asked, as soon as they were alone; "was it very far? Let us sit down in the sand. Was mother willing you should come?"

"She didn't know I came."

"O, Doll! that was wrong."

"She was away, down in the village, when I got the letter; I couldn't wait."

"Why did she write that I had better stay? Do you think I ought to stay?"

Dollikins did not know before that her mother had written Marianna to stay.

"Yes," she said, in a determined tone, "I do; and so does Mr. Perkins."

"I don't care what Mr. Perkins thinks," said Marianna tearfully, "and it must seem very ungrateful to Uncle John; but I am so homesick. I feel as if I shall die if we stay here. I think all the time of you and mother right on this very shore, and the waves sound just as they do at home, yet I am so far away. Oh! I would rather be in another country than to be near home, and yet not there. That is my old dress you have on, Doll — how dreadfully it is draped! To think that you are wearing my old clothes, and I have more than I want now. Why, this sun-umbrella cost more than we both used to spend in a year!"

"Let me hold it, then, a few minutes," said Dollikins; and they exchanged sun-umbrellas.

"Is that real lace?" pointing to a handkerchief between the buttons of Marianna's dress.

"Yes; it was a present from a friend of Aunt Maria's. I told Aunt I wanted to tell her, and I thought I ought, that I could never make her such a present, but Aunt Maria wouldn't let me."

"Does Aunt Maria — let me take the handkerchief," and Dollikins put it in her dress just as Marianna had worn it.

For some minutes she sat holding the fine umbrella above her head, and looking down at the soft lace of the handkerchief. "Let me see, what was I going to say! Oh! I know. Does Aunt Maria give you much money?"

"No; she buys me anything I want; but she says if I had money, I might start off some time and go home."

"Humph! Don't have any money! We will try and send you some. Can't you send that coachman off? I should like to take a drive, and see how I should feel in my own carriage. I never drove anything but old Adam. I should think that pony might go some. Can't you send that old policeman home?"

"O, no, indeed! Aunt Maria would never let me drive alone, and I have to promise that I won't drive home; but I believe that I could get up the courage to do it, if I believed mother really wanted me."

"I have changed my mind since I came here," said Dollikins impressively; "I think now it is better for you to stay. It was very mean for me to want you to go back. You must not keep thinking of mother, or — or anybody at Perkins's Bluff. It is a horrid place, and we are" — Dollikins looked cautiously about — "yes, we are poorer than we ever were. Mr. Perkins lives as well as we do. We pretend now that we are misers;

"I WANT TO TELL YOU SOMETHING; WE ARE EATING THE MAHOGANY BUREAU!"

[illegible]

that we could have better things if we were not so mean; of course we get some fun out of it, but sometimes, if you were there, Miss Bradley, you might wish that you were here." Marianna sniffed a feeble protest.

"I want to tell you something." Dollikins looked about again. "We are eating the mahogany bureau!"

"O, Dollikins! what would Grandmother Bradley say?"

"I don't know what old Dorcas would say, but young Dorcas thought it tasted very good."

"O, Dolly! it was cruel not to use my money."

"Your little fortune! Well, hard-a-lee! We'd tack a good many times before we'd do that. There, don't look so injured. I want to eat the Bradley urn next, and then, perhaps, if our appetites are still good we will eat up your money. Now will you please pretend for a little while that you are a very selfish girl, and don't care at all for your mother, or your sister, but care a great deal to ride, and be dressed up, and live like a princess. Of course I know it isn't a bit like you, but couldn't you enjoy being something not at all like yourself for a while — just a little while? I could. When I was a little girl I used to go down on the shore and play I was somebody else. Once I put on an old pair of gloves with long fingers, and picked up stones just the way Miss Stacy does; don't you know how

she sticks out her little finger when she picks up anything? It was great fun. Why can't you be — I mean pretend — that you are somebody that came from anywhere you would rather come from, and haven't any relations in the world? Why, you could almost be somebody else. It wouldn't be mean, but would just save you from agonizing for nothing."

"O, Doll! I am so miserable. I keep thinking perhaps if you were here in my place, mother would send for you."

"Of course she would," said Dollikins, bending her head until her nose touched the perfumed handkerchief; "she thinks I can bear everything, but she says you are delicate. I should think it would be great fun to be delicate."

"That is not the reason," said Marianna sadly.

"What, then, do you think?" said Dollikins, gently waving Marianna's umbrella.

"I will tell you, Doll; it is only a little while since I knew that mother was not my own mother — but — but she has known it always. You would not miss her as I do; you are always outdoors, down by the water, or out in a boat, or fishing; but I was always with her, and I feel now as if in a little while she would forget me. Uncle John says if I don't get over it in a week more, I may go home. I don't sleep very well; but I can't go home if mother doesn't want me."

"If you were at home, Miss Bradley, and felt well, I should despise you for saying that!" said Dollikins, trailing the costly umbrella in the sand.

"I cannot help it, Doll; it seems to me as if I cannot let you go home and leave me here. I lie awake all night hearing the waves, and I think I shall die soon — I do, Dolly, I do!"

For the first time Dollikins noticed that Marianna looked no better than when she left home. Her blue eyes looked larger than ever, and the veins showed in her white temples. She never before imagined that her sister might die. The thought aroused her whole soul. In a moment she called into active service all the ideas that she possessed, and sent them, like a brave, but badly regulated army, to Marianna's defense.

How could she ever have thought of Marianna's playing a part! As for herself, she could be a cold-hearted, selfish girl, forgetful of the little black house and its discomforts; but to expect this of Marianna was too absurd. There was but one thing to do. Miss Bradley must go home. She must not know that they had nearly eaten the bureau. When she reached home, she must have the doctor. Dollikins paid no attention to something that whispered in her ear that the doctor must have money. She went on persistently saying to

herself, "And she must have jelly, and peaches, no matter what they cost." All as impossible as the doctor.

"O, money, money!" thought Dollikins.

Suddenly these words seemed to ring through her mind — words that a few hours ago made little impression: "But I tell ye it's all yours, Dollikins — the Bluff, and the house, and the barn, and Perkins's Island, and a neat little sum."

The Bluff! Did not Bob Weston say he would give three thousand dollars for the Bluff? And she had only thought about the house. Three thousand dollars! Enough to last a lifetime. Marianna could go home, and they could have enough for all!

She turned her radiant face toward her sister, and seized her gloved hands in hers. Dollikins's soul was full of worldly calculations; but suddenly her better nature whispered sadly, "Not till he is in the churchyard."

CHAPTER IX.

DISCONTENT.

WHAT is it?" said Marianna, who could not have failed to see the expression of joy which lighted her sister's face, "what is it, Doll?"

"Nothing; nothing at all," said Dollikins gloomily.

"But you were thinking of something you thought was a good plan at first. Why can't you tell me?"

"Not to have money makes people think dreadfully mean things. Not you, but most people; me, for instance."

"I don't think so. I am sure Aunt Maria has a great deal of money, but she is much more selfish than mother."

"I am growing frightfully wicked, that's all, and it is because we haven't any money," and Dollikins looked solemnly at Marianna, and wondered what she would think if she knew that her sister had just been thinking about selling Mr. Perkins's Bluff for three thousand dollars, and buying oranges and jelly and chicken broth with the money.

With a sigh, she said, "There is always one thing we can

do: Uncle John said he would give ten thousand dollars for a child that was a Bradley; I will get mother to sell me. I will promise to do anything he says, just as if he was my own father. Then mother can stop working so hard."

"You good, generous little thing! I am ashamed when I think that I cannot stay away from home to save mother, and you would go and be Uncle John's own child! I cried the other night because Aunt Maria introduced me as her daughter."

"I shouldn't think you would care for that. Nobody would believe it. But I've got brown eyes, and so has Aunt Maria; and she has a pug nose, and mine is a little puggy." Here Dollikins gave the offending member a pull which ought to have lengthened it considerably.

"Don't, Doll; you have made your poor little nose quite red," said Marianna.

"Never mind the nose; but tell me, take it all round, you haven't had such a bad time, have you? I think I could stand all your trials if I had the chance. You have seen a good many rich people, haven't you, since you left us?"

"O, yes!" sighed Marianna wearily.

"And they are all mean, I suppose?"

"No, indeed, Dollikins! I have been often positively

ashamed when I have thought of the way we used to talk about people who had money."

"You found out that Aunt Maria was an angel, I suppose?"

"No; she is just about what I thought she was; but she has been very good to me, and is now, except when I am homesick; then she always gets angry; but, Dollikins, selfish people are selfish whether they are rich or poor. Aunt Maria has a friend who cannot spend her income, and" —

"Can't spend her income!" interrupted Dollikins; "what's the matter with her?"

"Nothing."

"I rather think that I could spend it. Just think what fun! No matter how much you spent, to find just as much left in your purse! To break your mother's back with satins, and then have plenty for peaches and chicken broth and jelly!"

"Why, Doll, I never heard you pine for broth and jelly," laughed Marianna.

"Oh! that was only in case anybody got sick," Dollikins said hastily. "I should buy myself a yacht — a big one — with brass work all over her, so that when she passed that miserable little sloop of Tom Betton's she would dazzle Tom so he couldn't see again for a mile. I detest Tom Betton! Once I would have liked to have had money to show Mr. Perkins

what money was for. If I had been rich as — what did you say that lady's name was that couldn't spend her income?"

"Her name is Smith."

"Good gracious! Why can't she buy a new name? Well, if I had been as rich as Mrs. Smith" —

"Miss Smith," corrected Marianna.

"*Miss* Smith — oh! she can change her name if she wants to — I am glad she's a Miss; well, I'll try again. If I had had Miss Smith's money I would have stuffed every rat hole in Mr. Perkins's house with ten dollar bills — that would have almost killed him; then I would have promised every time he would spend ten dollars, I would take a bill out of the hole and do whatever he said with it; but he has improved so much since you saw him, Miss Bradley, that you would hardly know him now."

"I hope he isn't getting wicked and wasteful," said Marianna, with a smile.

"No, he is pretty good. I tell him if he would only try to be wasteful, he would be just right. One day when he was fearfully mean, I said, 'Mr. Perkins, you don't want your mother to call you a miser when you die and go to see her, do you?'

"We were picking up wood just below Betton's Bluff. He

dropped all his wood just as if I had scared him, and I thought perhaps I better scare him a little more; and I said, without smiling a bit, 'I am sure, Mr. Perkins, that you would make a very mean angel; why, you would be too mean to shine up your harp for fear you might wear it out.'

"'Tut, tut, tut,' he said; 'don't ye talk 'bout what ye don't know nothing about;' but he looked scared, and I said, 'Of course if you don't change, you are going to be just the same; I know that, and so do you."

"'Well, well, well,' he said, 'when we — we — we — we cross the — the — the dark river, child, we have to leave our gold behind us.'

"'Of course I know that,' I said; 'but when you get your harp, Mr. Perkins, and see that it is gold, I am afraid that you will be too mean to use it. When all the other angels get to singing, your harp will be done up in tissue paper, and stuck in an old chair cushion, and your mother will be fearfully ashamed of you; but you will find that you can't help it. If you are mean when you are alive, you will be mean after you are dead.'"

"O, Dollikins! how could you talk to him like that?"

"I am glad I did it; he wasn't half so mean the next day. He only called me wicked — never said I was wasteful — and I

made dip-toast for his supper, and put lots of butter in it — his own butter, too; he had to pay for it. You'll be surprised when you see how much he has changed."

"O, Doll! if I could go back and be with mother and you, I believe I could even like Mr. Perkins! When anybody comes, does he still look out of the window with his red night-cap on?"

"O, yes!"

"If you could only leave that house, Doll, and go to a decent place, and be all together — but as long as mother is there I want to be."

"Oh! how I wish I were Miss Smith," sighed Dollikins. "Is she so very rich?"

"She really has so much money she can't spend it; and I never met her yet that she wasn't going somewhere to help somebody. She works hard, and all for other people. She is an angel, Dollikins."

"Homely, I suppose, as a horn-pout."

"I think she is beautiful," declared Marianna. "She has great brown eyes, and such beautiful hair."

"What color?"

"White as snow."

"White!" exclaimed Dollikins. "An old maid. Well, I

should think an old maid with white hair ought to be very good indeed."

"O, Dollikins! you are bad," sighed Marianna.

"I know it; but when I am an old maid with white hair I will be good, and if you meet me, I probably shall be going somewhere to help somebody; but just now—to-day—if I had any income, I would buy a few things for miser Perkins's tenants. To think of that old maid — named Smith — with an income that she can't spend, and I going a-visiting with borrowed hair-pins in my hair! O, dear! the world is all wrong; and there I have been living all my life, hopping along like a silly little peep on the sand; and I thought I was happy because I didn't know anything. I thought if I could get Mr. Perkins to wash his hands and have a white cloth on the table, that I was doing great things with a mission. The only thing I can do now is to drop my mission — despise him, and everything where we are. O, Marianna! how can you ever be glad to go back to the Bluff after you have had so much? Now I don't feel satisfied with anything."

"Would you be willing to change places with me?" asked Marianna simply.

"And live with Aunt Maria?" Dollikins made a very wry face, and her sister laughed, and said:

"I wish I could take you up to the hotel. I have ever so many pretty things I want to show you. Don't make me laugh any more."

"Let's go to the hotel," said Dollikins.

"Aunt Maria sits so much on the piazza, I am afraid she will see us; and she would not like to have you come, because she thinks it will make me homesick. I wrote you without telling her. Another thing, Doll." Marianna paused suddenly. "Aren't there any loopings on that overskirt? It looks like a bathing-suit."

"You are ashamed of me, Miss Bradley!"

"O, no!" said Marianna mildly; "but I'd a little rather Aunt Maria shouldn't see that dress. She says I have forgotten how badly I used to dress."

"Perhaps I'd better go home now." Dollikins could hardly keep back the tears.

"No, no; you do not understand, Doll! I used to be quite willing when we were home to be better dressed than you, but now it cuts me to the heart. I never put on a new dress without thinking, 'Poor little Doll is dancing around in a four-cent print, I suppose!' I like pretty things, but nothing that I can think of would compensate for giving up one's mother and home."

"Whew! Compensate! I know just what that means, but I should never have thought to say it. I will say that to Mr. Perkins when I get home."

"Don't mention going home, Doll; please don't! I will do anything that you want to do."

"Anything?" cried Dollikins, seized with a new idea. "I have thought of something!" She whispered a few words in her sister's ear. Marianna became almost white with surprise.

"You said anything I wanted, and now you must!"

CHAPTER X.

PLANS OVERTHROWN.

THE sun had just sunk, like a great ball of fire, into the calm water, and a few people stood upon the piazza of the hotel watching the radiant sky, as Mr. John Bradley, with a wearied face, descended from the hotel coach. He did not raise his eyes to the piazza, but walked slowly toward the water. When he reached the shore, he caught sight of Marianna's light dress, not far distant. His face brightened a little, and he hastened his step. A moment after he saw the phaeton in the distance, and somebody in it waving a handkerchief.

"That's Dollikins," he said to himself, "and she is going home without seeing me. That is very cowardly in Marianna. I never said Dollikins couldn't come here. Dollikins would never have done that, I am sure. She is a Bradley. I think I shall tell Marianna that she has done wrong. Poor thing! She is crying now I suppose because she, too, can't go back to the little old house. I am going to let her cry to-night, if she wants to. Perhaps it will do her good," and he sat down

upon the sand, not far from his niece, and taking a letter from his pocket, read it, and re-read it. Then, after looking off upon the water with troubled eyes, he read it once more.

While he was lost in thoughts that the letter had called up, he imagined he saw the flutter of Marianna's light dress going behind him, and in an instant his eyes were covered by two small hands. He seized them with pleasure, and cried,

IN THE DISTANCE.

"My Mary Ann!" a name by which he often called Marianna, to tease her.

A decided "No, sir!" much more emphatic than could have issued from the lips of Miss Bradley, made him start to his feet in surprise.

"It's only Dollikins, Uncle John. I'm in Marianna's good clothes. I am going to take all the blame. Marianna has gone home for a few days, and I am going to stay here. Can't you explain it so Aunt Maria won't scold Marianna?

I am afraid she is going to die. She doesn't look a bit better than when she came."

Uncle John did not answer a word, but sat down again upon the sand, and drew Dollikins to his side. She was thinking of her sister's pale face, and began to cry.

One of Marianna's lace handkerchiefs was tucked between the buttons of her dress. She pulled it out, and began to put the center of it in the corners of her eyes; but when Dollikins's tears came, they were generous ones.

"Would you mind lending me your handkerchief, Uncle John? I don't like to cry on one of Marianna's best ones," and she laughed through her tears.

He gave her his handkerchief, and she wiped her eyes.

"Are you going to cry just like Marianna?" he said.

"No, indeed!" she exclaimed, spreading the little square of lace upon his knee to dry. "I never cry unless people talk about dying, and then I don't cry unless they look pretty sick. Don't you ever cry?"

He shook his head.

"If you were not a man, you would cry to-night, wouldn't you?"

"Why to-night?"

"I don't know why. But I saw you long before you saw

me, and you looked as if you had some trouble. I watched you when you read that letter."

"And you thought I looked troubled?"

"Yes. And I was sorry, because I thought you were always happy. I should be, if I had so much money."

"And if you lost your money, what then?"

"I don't know what I should do. You haven't lost your money, have you?"

He was silent.

"Do tell me, Uncle John!" She spoke so earnestly, he looked almost sorrowful.

"It wouldn't make a great difference to you."

"O, yes! You could not buy me, then."

"How buy you?"

"I read in a letter that you wrote a long time ago, that you would give ten thousand dollars for a Bradley child. I was going to ask you to take me, and give the money to mother. She does have to work so hard! But you have lost your money; I know you have."

"I couldn't pay so much for you now, Dollikins."

"Are you as poor as we are? Will Aunt Maria have to sew, or do something?"

"No; I don't think it is as bad as that."

"Can't you keep a girl?"

"I hope we can manage to afford a small maid."

"Will you take me? I will go for fifty cents a week. I offered to be Mr. Perkins's servant for that. Of course I wouldn't tell that to anybody out of the family, and don't tell Aunt Maria."

HE SEIZED THE HANDS.

"If you will come for fifty cents a week, I will engage you to-night."

"Will you? How good you are! And will you pay me every week, so that I can give it to mother every Saturday night?"

"Yes."

"And you are sure you can afford it?"

"When I can't, I must let you go. If you had to wait a week or two, now and then, if money was very tight, I suppose you wouldn't leave us in a rage, with cake in the oven?"

She laughed, and said she would not leave unless she thought he meant to cheat her.

"But I must tell you, Uncle John, that I can only make

one kind of cake, and I am not always sure of that. I can make good bread, though, sure every time; but you don't expect to get a good cook for fifty cents a week, do you?"

"No. That would be asking too much. I'm afraid I shall have to take hold of the cooking myself."

He did not smile, and she remembered the anxious look he had bent upon the letter.

"He is trying to make fun," she thought. "But I believe he has lost all his money; and you, Dollikins Bradley, you were only sorry because you wanted him to pay ten thousand dollars. You have grown very mean lately." Such mental reproofs were quite common to Dollikins.

Removing the bit of lace, which was nearly dry, from his knee, she rested her hands in its place, and looked up into his face.

"I suppose you think I only care if you are poor because you can't buy me; but I do care, Uncle John, and if I ever have any money" — She stopped suddenly, thinking for the second time, that day, that the Bluff was worth three thousand dollars.

"What will you do?" he said, after waiting a moment for her to go on.

"I shall always love you, Uncle John," she said, in a low

tone; "always, always. That is all I can ever do for anybody. You were never poor, were you?"

"Never very poor."

"Then I suppose that you think you will never laugh any more." She spoke cheerfully again, for she was on ground that she knew well. "It isn't as bad as you think, truly. I am not saying this just to comfort you; but sometimes, for days and days, you won't think anything about it — and then, when you have to pay your rent, or the week's account-book comes in from the store, it is perfectly dreadful! Awful! Horrible! It will be hard for Aunt Maria, because she cares so much for new clothes."

"She has a good many on hand," he said, assuming an almost hopeful tone.

"Does she know that you have lost your money?"

"No; but she knows that everything wasn't quite right. Has she seemed worried to-day?"

"I haven't seen her."

"Not seen her! Doesn't she know that you came?"

"No, sir; because when Marianna took me to the hotel, she found that Aunt Maria had gone to the city. We had our dinner in Marianna's room, because I wasn't dressed very well, and we changed clothes in her room. When we came down,

"I SUPPOSE YOU THINK I ONLY CARE IF YOU ARE POOR BECAUSE YOU CAN'T BUY ME."

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Marianna said Aunt Maria had not come back. Do you think she will be very angry because Marianna went home?"

"I don't know; she is very fond of her."

"What does she do to please her?"

"She is always sweet-tempered."

"I think I could be for a few days. Does she do anything for her?"

"She plays backgammon with her."

"Does she let Aunt Maria beat?"

"Your aunt is a good player, and Marianna, some way, doesn't seem to have much luck."

"I won't have any luck. I wish I could please her, so she wouldn't scold Marianna. Does she like lemon jelly? I can make it, and it doesn't cost very much. Mr. Perkins is very fond of it. I make it when he is sick."

"When you come into my service I shall expect you to make some for me."

"Of course I will; but do you think Aunt Maria would like it?"

"No doubt of it."

"Do I look like a fright in Miss Bradley's clothes? She is a good deal taller than I am. I'll stand up, and you see how I look."

She arose, but the darkness had crept slowly over them, and Uncle John only looked at the face of the girl before him; and it recalled to him the first face that he had loved on earth, the first that he hoped to see in heaven — his mother's. Who would not pardon him that he did not see that Dollikins's dress was much too long-waisted?

"If it doesn't fit, we will soon have one that does," he said, apparently forgetting his financial condition.

She was on the point of reminding him of the impossibility of carrying out this generous impulse, when a puffing sound behind them caused them both to turn quickly, Uncle John, probably, because he recognized the hysterical presence of his wife, and Dollikins because she dreaded meeting anybody in Miss Bradley's clothes.

"Nobody treats me with any respect," gasped Aunt Maria, as her husband arose to meet her. "My anxiety has almost killed me to-day, yet you take your supper without knowing, or caring, whether I am dead or alive, and then sit calmly down to look at the water, without even sending Thomas to the train for me, when you know that to ride in that old coach almost kills me."

"I have not been to the hotel, my dear, so how could I know that you were away? Yes, I did know it, a moment

ago. D"— He was just about to say, "Dollikins told me so."

"Marianna knew it, and she has had Dollikins here to-day. Wasn't it very mean to do that, just as soon as my back was turned? Marianna, you need not speak to me for three days; it was very sly, and mean, and ungrateful."

Dollikins felt that there was some justice in her aunt's words. She started up, but her uncle, putting his hand upon her shoulder, kept her quiet.

"Have you been to supper, Maria?" he said quietly.

"I am in no state of mind to eat. I went to your office, and you had just gone; then I went up to the house, and you had just left there. Think of what I have done to-day! I shouldn't wonder if I had to stay in bed for a week to pay for it. But I know it all. You were in no hurry to tell me, but I found it out."

"Of course I was in no hurry to tell you anything disagreeable. Who told you?"

"Mr. Johnson."

"It was honest money, Maria, and it did not come as fast as it went."

"Of course it was honest money, and if they don't give you back every cent, they are thieves."

"The whole thing has gone up; there is no money for anybody."

"You ought to have yours, anyway!"

"Why should I have mine any more than the others? We speculated, and lost."

"They are a pack of black thieves," sobbed Aunt Maria, "and they have ruined all my plans for the future. Now we can't afford to keep Marianna with us, and she will have to go back and live in that dingy hole again, and worse than all that, many people think she is our own daughter. I am very angry with you, Marianna; but I shall be sorry for you. Wasn't I planning to give you a grand coming-out party next winter? Now you will never come out. You will go back, and marry a clam-digger, or a sailor, and die in Miser Perkins's house. No," she continued, after a prolonged sigh, "the change will kill you."

It was with difficulty that Dollikins suppressed a laugh at the idea of the fastidious Miss Bradley wedded to a clam-digger.

"Why do you sit there as if you were dumb, Marianna; are you crying still?"

"I thought you told her not to speak to you for three days," said Uncle John, who had been thinking that his nieces

could not have chosen a more unseasonable time for changing places; but with a determination to do his best for all concerned, he gave one arm to his wife, the other to Dollikins, and said, "Come, let us go into the house and see if we can recognize each other after the excitement of the day. Let us talk no more about it. We deserved to lose it, Maria."

"John Bradley, what do you mean?"

"Don't talk so loud, my dear; any one on the water could hear every word you say. When I say that we deserve it, I mean that when we had more than enough to take care of us, and my brother's family were working night and day to make both ends meet, we should have invested a little there."

"Where?" she exclaimed; "down at Perkins's Bluff?"

"Exactly. The dividends might have astonished us some day."

"I have not the faintest idea what you mean."

They had nearly reached the hotel. In a moment the bright light would fall upon Dollikins in Marianna's clothes. She drew nearer to her uncle, and her fingers tightened upon his coat sleeve.

As they reached the steps, the phaeton drove up, and Thomas, touching his hat, said, solemnly, "I drove the young leddy home, sir, as Miss Bradley gave orders, and her mother

said as I was to tell you that Mr. Perkins was dying." He added this last with some show of feeling.

"O, Uncle John! take me home, please, quick, quick," cried Dollikins.

"Dear me, Marianna, your voice sounded so much like Dollikins's you gave me a dreadful start," said her aunt. "Mercy! It is Dollikins," as the young girl came forward under the full light of the hotel. "Dollikins in Marianna's dress and hat! What has happened? Where is Marianna? Won't any one take the trouble to tell me where Marianna is?"

"It is all my fault, Aunt Maria; I proposed it, and I am to take all the blame; but I must go home now," she added tearfully.

"Not till morning," said her uncle kindly; "you can do no good to-night."

"Please ask Thomas if mother knew before he left that I was going to stay. I can walk. I walked over."

"That old man is nothing to you, child," said her aunt; "and if you have sent Marianna away, you must stay in her place. I won't stay alone now that I am so nervous. Your uncle may have to go to the city very early to-morrow, and stay until late."

Dollikins heard nothing that her aunt said; she was try-

ing to catch a word of the low conversation that was going on between her uncle and Thomas. But she heard nothing, and her heart fell as she saw the phaeton drive away. Still she was able to say, in a fairly steady voice, when her uncle came back, "I can walk very well, Uncle John."

"Of course you can; and there I have ordered the gray horse put in the buggy. But I thought I ought to go, and perhaps you would drive over with me, even if you came back to-night."

A few minutes later they were seated in a light buggy, and the gray horse seemed flying over the hard, wet sand.

"So the old miser is really dying," said Uncle John cheerfully. "Pull that cobweb thing up around your throat, child; it is cool by the water."

"Oh! it is too bad to have him die now, just as he is getting so good and generous," she said, wiping away the tears that flow easily when the heart is young.

"Come, tell me, what has he done except buy some sheets for himself to sleep in?"

"He has painted the house."

"No! you don't mean it; and feeds his own horse! Well, that is generous."

"Oh! don't," she said, "please don't; perhaps he is dead."

"And perhaps he isn't. What else has he done to make you so fond of him?"

"I don't suppose that I could make it seem much to you, because you were never a miser; but he used to be so stingy that he would sit in the cold when he had plenty of wood rather than burn a stick of it. At first I tried to shame him by giving him all the wood — drift-wood, you know — that he could possibly use. I used to throw it into the fireplace as if it had been only clam shells; but I soon found that was a mistake, for he only thought I was very wicked. Whatever I did was always 'wicked and wasteful.' How tired I got of those two *w's*! Whenever I came across a big *W* in reading, I always said to myself 'wicked,' or 'wasteful;' and *w* is rather a sorrowful letter; don't you think so?"

"I had never thought so. Is it?"

"I think it is. One day I tried to think of a jolly word beginning with *w* and I couldn't do it. I could only think of wicked and wasteful, and war, and wash, and work, and whalebone — think of the poor men that have to go away and stay so long catching whales, and then the poor women that have to wear corsets — and wig and whiskers, both horrid."

"Now I must begin to defend that poor letter," declared Uncle John, laughing; "for it's the beginning of wealth."

"Money isn't much unless you can have everything else," she returned rather scornfully.

"Wife," he suggested, good-naturedly, "and water-melon, and wag."

"All pretty bad unless you can have the very best. O dear! how can I make fun when poor Mr. Perkins is dying?"

"You started to tell me how good he was," said her uncle hastily, fearing a fresh flow of tears.

"How much he had improved. Well, he was beginning to be almost generous; he didn't care himself how the house looked, or what the people thought of it; and yet he is having it painted, just because I wanted everybody that went by to see that he wasn't a miser now."

As her uncle laughed a little she continued hurriedly: "Oh! I don't expect you to understand it; you feel just as I did at first; but if you could see how hard it was for him to be like other people, you would praise him a little."

"O, no! that is too much to ask me to praise a stingy, dirty old man because he learns to burn other people's wood without grumbling; and as for the house, it ought to be painted to preserve it. You'll have to make out a better case than that, Dollikins, before I can praise your miser."

"He tried to be clean after he had his table set every day,

and sometimes he wore his best coat to dinner. He never growls at me now, no matter what I do, and he has the rheumatism abominably. He loves his mother although she has been dead so many years, and his sister Betty, too; and he says turning over a new leaf when a man gets to be past seventy is mor'n a little gal born in these wasteful days can fathom; and — you are laughing again, and I don't like to have you make fun of him now."

"Then I won't, if you will promise to take as good care of me when I get old and stingy."

"You could never be stingy, Uncle John. Oh! wouldn't you be a jolly mission?"

"Mission?" He turned with curiosity toward her.

She explained without embarrassment, but a bright color followed the laugh, which he enjoyed for a full minute, and she wished she had not been so confidential.

"So you took him for a mission, did you?" He pulled his whiskers with his free hand and allowed the reins to slacken a little.

"Yes; and I got so sick of it sometimes that I wished I hadn't; but when I found that he really did try to be — not quite so stingy — why, I couldn't drop him, don't you see?"

"Of course not. When he began to burn your wood, and

eat your dinners, then you began to feel encouraged, eh?" laughed her uncle.

"We went after the wood together; and he bought quite a good deal of food, for him, after he was sick. We cooked it for him. I must say that the sheets cost so much that it almost killed him, but after a while he paid for them, and the doctor's bill besides. Why, Uncle John, you wouldn't believe it possible for a man to squirm as he used to before he could give away a dollar!"

"And now he is going where he won't need a cent of it, Dollikins."

"Yes," she murmured with a sigh, and for a time the silence was unbroken save by the surf and the regular striking of the horse's feet upon the wet sand.

CHAPTER XI.

TEMPTATION.

THE sunlight danced upon the sea, and shone upon the little half-painted house and poor garden; even on old Maria, as she sought, unhindered, forbidden spots to scratch in.

There was sunshine everywhere except in Dollikins's heart. That morning her mother had said that she had new plans for the future, and as soon as Mr. Perkins died, they would prepare to leave the house.

"Nobody will care when he is dead," thought Dollikins, "all because he was a miser once."

She was standing at the door, looking down at the sparkling sand. Suddenly she caught sight of a man in a dory coming toward the shore. It was an unusual thing for a fisherman to land there, and for a moment she forgot her grief, and ran toward the beach. Before she had gone far, she recognized Mr. Perkins's nephew.

The old man had only spoken once since she came home; then he had asked, "Have you seen Jack Barker?"

"Are you coming in?" she called, upon reaching the water.

"Yes," he answered.

"Don't come in on this wave; it's too big. Take the next one!" she cried.

"The bigger the better," he said, as he jumped from the boat, that came in like a chip on the great wave, and was pulled up on the dry sand before the next wave could murmur its astonishment.

"How is my uncle?" he asked, in the same cheerful tone he had used a year before.

"It's his heart," she said mournfully. "He will never get well. He wants to see you. You will go and see him, won't you?"

"Did he say he wanted to see me?"

"I know he does, for I saw him last night, and he asked me if I had seen you."

He had made a little hole in the sand with his boot-heel, and appeared to be looking for something to put in it. Soon he found a bit of shell and began to polish it on his sleeve. When it shone satisfactorily he seemed to have forgotten the hole, and skimmed the shell over the water, saying:

"If he hadn't been so mean to me when I was a boy, may be I might have been something; I don't say that I should for certain, but I might have been, perhaps. I had no father

nor mother to help me, and he wouldn't do anything for me, and I had to go to sea. He said I could go to school where he did — to a plough and a fish-hook."

He paused to pick up a pebble: "And you think he won't pull up again, Miss Dollikins?"

"No," she said tearfully, "he cannot get well, the doctor says."

"I don't want to hold out if he don't," said the sailor, throwing the pebble much farther than the bit of shell had gone. "Besides, it seems almost too low not to take a man's hand when he's going to ship for a voyage where you know there will never be any coming back. And I am the only one to inherit the Bluff and old Adam; and yet on that very account I would not go to see him before. He knows I don't like him; he knows that I think he ought to have sent me to school. I would have paid him back; I told him so. I have never troubled him much. Now when he is almost gone, to hang around — why, he will think I am anxious about the money. He ought to know I am sure of that."

"Sure of that!" The words smote her as if she had been guilty. She had not thought of Mr. Perkins's possessions since she came home. Now her only wish was that no one should know that she had ever thought of selling the Bluff.

He did not understand her confusion, and said, "Oh! it must sound very wicked to you, that never thought of holding a hard feeling against anybody, and perhaps you were sent by Heaven to make peace between us. We two are all that's left, and I'd promise to settle down in the old house, if it would please him any."

The tears came to her eyes. It had been such a pleasant thought to her that sometime her mother would not have any rent to pay. But of course it was right that he should have it.

"And tell Uncle Perkins from me, will you," he continued, "that if he don't leave you a little for peppermints, he's meaner than I thought, and he knows how mean that is? And speaking of small sums, I haven't a penny about me."

"Do you want your twenty dollars now?"

"It would come like a drop of fresh water to a shipwrecked man. I did not mean ever to take it; and I wouldn't for myself, but I am married now, and my wife hasn't any summer bonnet. I'll call for it this afternoon, and then, if my uncle wants to see me, I will stop. Make peace if you can."

She hastened back to the house. Her mother was just coming from Mr. Perkins's room. "I think," she said, "that he is asleep. Will you sit by him while I make some beef tea?"

The old man opened his sunken eyes as Dollikins seated herself softly by the bed.

"Has Jack Barker come?" No sound came from his blue lips; if she had not been watching him, she would not have known that he had spoken.

"I saw him on the shore only a minute ago. He is coming to see you soon — to-day — this afternoon."

"He's Betty's boy, and I — I robbed him. But you stood by me, and he didn't."

"I think he was afraid to come, Mr. Perkins, because he thought if he did come, that you might think that he only came after some money. You know he isn't a bit mean."

"Say that ag'in." There was a strange light in the old man's eyes, but she did not see it. She was only wondering how she could tell him what his nephew had said, and how she could make peace between them.

"He wants to see you, I know; but he can't bear to have you think he only comes about money. I think that is very nice of him, don't you?"

"He's high-strung, like Betty," he whispered.

"You will be glad to see him when he comes, won't you?" she asked earnestly.

"Yes. Now give me the will."

She brought it from the old desk, and he held it in his nerveless fingers. "I will show it to Jack, and he will do the fair thing," he said. His eyes looked so bright she thought he was going to get well.

"Ye haven't told yer mother 'bout this?"

"No; I have not told anybody — of course not."

"Ye don't know now what this is worth; but when ye get to be a woman, if ye feel like blaming me, Mistress Dollikins, just say to yerself, 'Blood is thicker than water.' It's an old saying, out o' fashion nowadays, but it's true. That Bluff ain't been out o' the hands of the Perkinses since the Indians,"—he paused for several moments,—"but if Jack Barker can't get here before I'm gone, it's yours, Mistress Dollikins. Put this in your pocket." He held the will toward her, not feebly, but firmly.

She obeyed, thinking he was getting well fast.

"You feel sure he'll come?"

"O yes! to-day — this afternoon."

"I'll send for ye when he comes, and ye ain't the gal to want what don't belong to ye. He's Betty's boy, ye know; Betty's boy, and" —

He stopped suddenly, as if interrupted, and a smile, such as she had never seen before, illumined his worn face. Her

mother came in with the beef tea, and Dollikins was surprised at the consternation in her face.

"But we ought to be thankful," she said, "that he has been spared the pain the doctor expected."

"Will he get well?" asked Dollikins, as her mother led her from the bed.

"Dear child, he is beyond our care."

"He is dead!" sobbed Dollikins, entering the little parlor where Marianna sat.

"No, no! don't say that," said Marianna excitedly, "for I just saw his nephew coming. See, he is almost at the gate now! And somebody is with him."

Yes, it was surely Betty's boy, but he had come too late. Yet when he looked upon the face of his dead uncle, and saw the look of peace upon the still warm lips, he said to his wife, "I believe that somehow she made it up between us, for he looks well satisfied."

Mrs. Bradley was standing near them, and she took his wife's reply as the key-note to her character.

"Ain't you going to take possession to-day?" she said, glancing about the room.

A deep red glowed in the sailor's brown face, and his good-natured eyes became stern.

"I think I would leave a man his house until he was buried," was Jack's reply.

"Anyhow, I want to see everything here," she returned. "I never was inside the house before."

"You'll see enough of it before you die, I'm afraid."

"Well, I should look over his papers, Jack, any way. Don't you think that is proper enough, Mrs. Bradley?"

But Mrs. Bradley had left them, to take possession or not, as they saw fit.

"He's a better-looking man, Em, than I thought he was," said the young man, turning toward his wife, who was inspecting the closet.

"I wouldn't pretend now to see good even in his looks," she said, taking down the precious sugar-bowl.

But the year of struggle, and the gradual growth of other feelings beside the enjoyment of accumulation, had softened the hard, shrewd face, and his last thought had been justice to his only kinsman, and faith in Mistress Dollikins.

While his wife was exploring the old desk, Jack laid his hand affectionately upon the forehead of the old man, and whispered a hasty but sincere prayer for the peace of his soul.

"I wish you wouldn't keep so still," said his wife, turning toward him nervously.

He drew back from the bed as if guilty, and she came to him with her hands full of papers; among them a large yellow envelope, which she held tightly, dropping the other papers upon the floor. She grew pale as she read the superscription: "Miss Dorcas Bradley."

"This is your uncle's will," she said, in a low, fierce tone.

"Give it to me," he said calmly.

"I would not trust you with it," she returned scornfully, at the same time opening and glancing through it. "He leaves her all! all! All, Jack, but five hundred! He calls her his only friend in time of need. Who is she? Are you an idiot? Why don't you speak?"

"He did what was right, Em," said the sailor, with whitening lips, "but it's a blow! Yet it was the square thing, and if I lay where he is, I wouldn't be ashamed of it. I thought he had a square look on his face I never saw before. That little girl brought him to a decent death. She could do for him without thinking of his money; we couldn't. 'Tain't often you see any one rewarded like that, here below; but he did it, and I'll stand by it, though I'll own it's a blow."

"If you will stand still and see a girl pick both your pockets," said his wife, at the same moment tearing the will to shreds, "I will not!"

"I'll stand by what the pieces say," said the young man firmly, examining the fragments that lay at her feet.

"I will burn every scrap," she said, with determination.

"Burn them," he said, with a smile. "Uncle Perkins was too shrewd for you; it was only the copy of the will."

DESTROYING THE WILL.

It was with an anxious face that the widow met the inquiring looks of her daughters when she went back to the little parlor.

"I have been trying to prepare for this," she said hopelessly, "but nothing has come of my efforts. I have advertised for a position as housekeeper, and I have answered two advertisements, but no answer has come; and now I feel that it is too late to expect one. I cannot afford to advertise any more. If your Uncle John did not stand ready to have you both stay with him as long as you wished, I should not know which way to turn."

"She does not know," thought Dollikins, "that Uncle

John has lost his money, that Miss Bradley can't go there any way, and I must be a servant if I go. I am glad I didn't tell her last night, but I thought Uncle John would."

"How long we can stay here, I have no idea," continued her mother; "I believe Mr. Barker intends to come here to live."

"You can take your own time, mother, I am sure," said Marianna. "Mr. Barker is very kind, and he will not forget how much you did for Mr. Perkins. I don't see why you can't go to Uncle John's yourself for a few weeks; he would be happy if you would."

She spoke hopefully, but the usually brave Dollikins said never a word, but now and then she raised her head defiantly, as if some thought had taken personality, and was confronting her. She did not know she was being tempted.

She saw her mother obliged to leave the only shelter she could afford. Her sister could not return to her uncle, for he was no longer a rich man. The old man had given her the house; why did she not tell them? Did he not say, "If I go before Jack comes, it is yours, Mistress Dollikins"? Had it not troubled her much to keep this secret so long from her mother? Now, why did she not take the will from her pocket and show it?

"Not yet, not yet," she thought; "perhaps we shall not have it."

The words the old man had spoken kept repeating themselves in her mind, with the sacredness that death had added to them.

She looked up, and saw her mother's anxious face, and quickly left the house and sought the comforting waves.

"She is growing old too fast," said her mother; "she has been like a woman since you went away."

"She will never outgrow taking her troubles down to the shore, will she?" said Marianna. "I really believe she is the only mourner Mr. Perkins will have."

Dollikins had a large cotton umbrella that she called her tent. The long handle was sharpened to a point which she could easily push into the sand.

In a few minutes she had set up her tent, and there she determined to stay until she had made up her mind what to do — in reality, until she conquered or was conquered.

"If Mr. Perkins's nephew must have the house," she reasoned, "I must not let mother know how near we came to having it."

In her heart she knew that the old man wanted his nephew to be his heir. It was but an accident that he did not come

in time to take everything from his uncle's own hand. How happy his old face had looked when she assured him that Jack would come that day! How honest Jack had been about Marianna's father's money! and yet — and yet, there was her mother, with always the rent to pay!

If she had been older, or less honest in intention, the idea of division might have occurred to her. But there was no question of compromise in her simple thinking. There was nothing for the law to settle, if she had known anything about law; it was a question for her conscience alone. If she could only go to her mother for direction! No, no; above all, her mother must not suffer disappointment.

Mr. Perkins had spoken truly when he said she was not the girl to want what did not belong to her.

She drew the will from her pocket. She would not give herself even the satisfaction of reading it. Was it because she dared not trust herself, or because he had told her to wait until he was in the churchyard? It would be a pleasure to tell Jack; but he must not know it, or he would be angry with his uncle because he had given it first to her.

She held the long envelope between her fingers ready to tear; she looked off into the cloudless blue that seemed to meet the water so far away, and whispered: "I shall do it, dear

SHE WENT TO MEET THE INCOMING WAVES TEARING THE WILL AS SHE WALKED.

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God; not because I want to, but because I ought, and if mother is sick, You will help us pay the rent."

"And the Bluff," said the tempter quickly, "the Bluff that Bob Weston will buy for three thousand dollars! Oh! three thousand dollars!"

Her only answer was to get up so suddenly that her tent was lifted with her; but casting it aside, she went to meet the incoming waves, tearing the will as she walked.

"I shall tell Marianna and Uncle John," she said, as the bits of paper rose and fell, rushed in, and then out again on the white surf. "I will never tell mother; but I must tell somebody."

She went back, set up her tent, and lay down upon the hot sand, with her head upon her arm. "I hope he is pleased," she thought. "I took him for my mission, and I don't think I was ever mean to him."

In a moment she was asleep, and dreamed that Mr. Perkins sailed by in a beautiful boat, with sails as white as milk, and waved his hand to her, and looked very happy. She was sorry when he sailed out of sight, and would have cried, but for the sudden coming of her Uncle John, who laughed so heartily that she awoke, to find him really looking into her tent.

"A few minutes more," he said, "and you and your umbrella would have been swept into the sea. Are you a mermaid, that you dare go to sleep on the shore with the tide coming in?"

"I knew the tide was coming in, but I did not know I was going to sleep."

"But you did go to sleep, and I was sent to hunt you up; and while you slept I played the guardian uncle, and I believe if you will take me under your umbrella, you will hear of something to your advantage, as the lawyers say when they advertise for lost heirs. First place, has Mr. Perkins's nephew turned up yet?"

"Yes; he is in the house now."

"Possibly I might have answered that question myself, as I have been talking an hour with your mother. Dollikins, I believe the old miser left you something, and this young rascal made way with the will. I believe I found pieces of it on the shore."

"No, Uncle John, I did it myself," she said humbly; "he gave me the house and the Bluff a long time ago, but yesterday he was sorry, and wanted Jack to have them. He said if Jack did not come before he was gone, I might have the will. Jack came; but I don't know just when he did die, because I

thought he was getting well fast when mother said he was dead. Perhaps Jack did come before he was gone, or perhaps he meant before he was gone out of the house into the churchyard. Anyway, I know he wants Jack to have it."

"Do you think, my daughter, that you had a right to destroy a will without consulting your mother?"

"She would have given it to Jack, and I didn't want her to know that she came near never having to pay rent again."

"Then you think you did right?"

"I am sure I did, Uncle John; but I shall be glad when we go away, and I don't live in this house, because some time I might wish I hadn't done it. Don't you think that to be poor makes people dreadfully mean sometimes?"

"It is not being poor, nor rich, my little girl, that makes people mean or generous, good or bad; there is temptation for everybody."

He was crouched down under her tent, trying to piece together the bits of the will he had picked up. Suddenly he looked closely at a piece, and said, laughing softly, "Your good intention, my dear, as well as my trouble, can go for naught, as this is only a copy of Mr. Perkins's will."

CHAPTER XII.

GOOD-BY, LITTLE BLACK HOUSE.

THREE days after the funeral, Dollikins was packing tins into a barrel, preparatory to moving, she knew not where, when her mother came into the kitchen greatly excited. She held letters in her hand which Dollikins counted at a glance, and found the number to be three. They were the letters she had hastily thrown into a drawer when she went to visit Marianna, and there they had rested, forgotten by her until this moment.

"Oh! it was too bad," she exclaimed. "I never thought to tell you anything about them. The painter brought them at the same time he brought the one from Marianna."

"It would have saved me much anxiety," said her mother mildly, "but perhaps it is not too late now. This is Thursday, and it is this afternoon that I must go to the city. It is too good to be true! It is the position I was so anxious to get. I have said nothing to you, because I could not bear to have you disappointed; but now you can go away to school!"

"And you will be a housekeeper?" said Dollikins, with trembling lips.

"Almost every woman is a housekeeper," said her mother cheerfully.

"In her own house," said Dollikins.

"Don't be ungrateful. This is what I have hoped for always — to send you away to school, and pay for it myself. Now you can go."

"And Miss Bradley?"

"She can go back to your Uncle John's. Your Aunt Maria is very lonely without her."

"Did he say she could go back?"

"Why, certainly."

"Did he say anything about me?"

"He said of course you must go to school; I did not tell him that I was looking for a position, but I shall tell him to-day. I was afraid that he might veto it. He was very good and considerate, and invited me to stay with him until I knew what I was going to do.

"I saw Mr. Barker this morning, and asked him if I could store some things in a barn for a few days; and he looked very much embarrassed, and said to do whatever I saw fit with anything. The place was more mine than his. He has not

been in the house since the funeral. He doesn't want us to feel that he is driving us out. He said he would be round again, and if we had any lifting to do, he would help us. He acts as if he thought it quite a favor to let him come into his own house."

Mrs. Bradley's letter had proved a most remarkable tonic. She worked unceasingly, covering furniture, and packing, and doing the thousand and one little drudgeries that fall to the woman who moves and has no servant. And yet, as the day wore on, it seemed as if her spirits had not reached the meridian of her satisfaction.

Marianna soon caught her merry mood, for she was well pleased at the idea of her mother's going to the city; for, if there, could she not see her often? And Dollikins would spend her vacations with her, and the sewing that she thought must be never-ending would be no more than a bad dream when the night is past.

Marianna and her mother talked gaily together, but Dollikins was silent. Her mind was confused, and her face began to reflect the struggle that had been going on in her heart. She wondered more and more that her uncle had not told her mother that he had lost his money.

"Are you sorry to leave this old house?" asked Marianna.

"Not if we could all go together to another," said Dollikins.

"You are sick, Doll. That is all that can explain the way you have behaved for the last few days," said Marianna. "It is not one bit like you to look on the dark side, and now, too, just as everything begins to look bright. Why, perhaps you will go to school in the city, and then mother and I can see you at any time. I am just happy about it. It must be a very fine house where this Mr. Clark lives, for he wrote mother that he would add to her salary the wages of just as many servants as she could dismiss, and get along without."

"Yes; but something is going to happen so everything won't be so beautiful," sighed Dollikins.

"Why, Doll, what is the matter with you? You feel sad now because Mr. Perkins died, and we are going away from the water. Mr. Perkins was always pleasant enough to you, but he was a stingy old thing to the last. I haven't said so before, because I knew it would make you feel sorry; but when I think what a little slave you were, taking him for a mission, and washing his grandmother's dishes so carefully, and working so hard to make him something beside a pig and a miser; and then when I think that he did not give you an old cup, or sugar-bowl, or a dollar out of his dirty cushion to buy something to look at, so when you thought of him you could re-

member something besides dirt and stinginess, why, it makes me despise him! I wish everything he owned could be buried with him, old Adam and all!"

"Why, Marianna," cried her mother, "I never knew you to speak like that before!"

Marianna's pale face became quite red. "I won't say any more, but I mean what I have said, and I would be perfectly willing to say it to Mr. Barker."

"Sometime you won't think Mr. Perkins was so stingy," said Dollikins.

"Don't try to defend him, dear," said Marianna, returning to her usual gentle tone.

"There is Mr. Barker now, coming in the back door, Marianna," said her mother. "You can tell him if you wish."

"He looks disconsolate enough," said Marianna. "I really didn't mean I would like to tell him, because he is not miserly. I think he is very generous. I like him because he has been so polite to us about the moving."

Jack Barker's free-and-easy manner had deserted him, and Marianna did not exaggerate the fact when she said he looked disconsolate enough.

He offered to tie up a large bundle which Mrs. Bradley was struggling with, but when she yielded it to him, he worked

with an absent air, and as soon as he had tied it, he sat upon it, and seemed lost in troubled thought.

"Has anything gone wrong, Mr. Barker?" asked the widow, in that cheerful tone which people unconsciously use when they feel that their own affairs are on the mend.

He immediately attributed her animation to a knowledge of his uncle's will.

With an effort he said, "You don't know me much, Mrs. Bradley, but you must know me well enough to call me honest."

The widow's face expressed simply affable surprise.

"I want to ask you," he continued, looking very hard at the knot he had just tied, "if you knew anything about my uncle's affairs — whether he made any will or not?"

"He never talked to me about his affairs in any way," said the widow.

"It's hard luck for me if he made a will," said Jack, trying to speak carelessly, "for if he did, everything goes to Miss Dollikins."

"To Dollikins!" cried the widow and Marianna at the same instant.

"That's what the copy says that my wife found among my uncle's papers. I hoped you could tell me something about

it, for if he wanted to cut me off, I don't want his money; but it's a blow that will knock the last speck of reason out of my wife's top-piece."

Dollikins came towards him, her cheeks whiter than Marianna's.

"He wanted you to have it," she said, in a low voice. "He told me so. He said if you came before he went, I must give the will to you. I tore it up, but Uncle John says Bob Weston has another. I didn't want mother to know it, because — oh! because" —

Poor Dollikins could say no more. She went back to where she had been sitting on the floor packing books, and bowed her head upon the box, regardless of the tears that flowed generously over the best volumes. She was crying now as she had longed to cry ever since Mr. Perkins died.

"Brace up, little girl!" said Jack, his own eyes dim. "What do we care about the lawyers? We only want the truth."

He sat down upon the box, and put his great brown hand on her bowed head. "Tell me, now, why did you tear up the will?"

"Because — be — er — er — cause, Mr. Perkins wanted you to — er — er have it."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Yes; he thought surely you would come," sobbed Dollikins.

"You really believe he wanted me to have some of it? Say this on your honor now."

"Er — er — all! er — all!" she said convulsively.

"And I believe he wanted you to have it. Now see here, we neither of us have been to see Weston; he has not been to us. If there is any will, he has it. Whatever there is to inherit, you think ought to come to me, and I believe it ought to go to you. Let's go snacks."

"I don't know what that means," said Dollikins.

"Let's divide."

"He did not mean that," she returned gently.

"There comes your uncle. Ask him."

When appealed to Mr. Bradley said, "Don't hurry. I saw Weston this morning; you won't find out anything from him at present."

"I can't go home till I know," said Jack.

"You won't go home for a month, then," said Mr. Bradley. "Weston says Mr. Perkins was a queer oyster, but his shell was his own, and he had the right to open it when he pleased. Weston is as faithful to a dead client as to a live one, and the

old man said no one should see his will until he had been dead a month. So don't let it interfere with the moving."

"But I can't work any more," said the widow. "To think Mr. Perkins should remember Dollikins!"

"I wish I had not said such disagreeable things about him," said Marianna pensively. "It wasn't quite like me, was it, Doll?"

"It is no use; I cannot go on packing," said Mrs. Bradley. "Do you believe it was a copy of the real will that Dollikins destroyed? A man like Mr. Perkins might enjoy making wills, and make one every day. What do you believe, John?"

"I am afraid you would have no confidence in anything I could say," said Mr. Bradley gravely. "Why didn't you ask my advise before you laid your plans to go and be Clark's housekeeper?"

"Do you know him?" she exclaimed.

"I know that he is not the rich man you imagine him."

"O, John! won't he pay me what he agrees to pay?"

"You ought to have asked me before you wrote him."

"I was afraid you would oppose it, and I must do something. Pride has kept me from taking care of my children as they deserve, John."

"Oh! Clark will pay you, no doubt of that, but you will earn your money."

"That is what I am willing to do. With the salary he has offered me, I believe I can clothe Marianna, and send Dollikins to school."

"You said, the other day, you wanted me to take them both."

"But I had not heard anything definite then from Mr. Clark. Now I feel almost independent."

"But Dollikins has promised to come and live with me."

"When?" cried Marianna.

"The day she was at the hotel. I am to pay her fifty cents a week, and find no fault with the cooking."

Mrs. Bradley and Marianna burst into a merry laugh, but he remained perfectly serious. "Of course, if Dolly is to be Mr. Perkins's heir, I must hunt up another maid. Are you going to be ready for that five o'clock train?"

"I must be ready for it, if I leave everything as it is, for Mr. Clark wrote that he must see me to-night."

"You can leave everything here, and take the key," said Jack. "I will never come into this house until I know that it belongs to me."

"Nobody knows that, unless it be Weston," said Mr.

Bradley. "If there is a will I believe it reads in Dollikins's favor, Mr. Barker; but I also believe that when the old man came to die, he regretted it — when it was too late. I remember when we boys used to have a mild fight, and declared we liked any boy better than our brothers, my grandmother always said, 'When you get to be old, boys, you will find that blood is thicker than water.'"

"That is just what Mr. Perkins said!" cried Dollikins. "He said when I was a woman, and thought I ought to blame him for giving the will to Jack, to think of that."

"You are sure he said that?" asked Jack excitedly.

"I remember it," she said, "and he kept saying, 'He's Betty's boy;'" and slowly, and with some difficulty, she recalled and related every word the old man had spoken.

"Here is evidence for a court of equity," said her uncle. "The will that Weston has will give all to Dolly, but" —

"But she shall not take it," said her mother eagerly.

"Yet if the old man could have made another will he would not have left her out altogether," said Uncle John.

"Never!" ejaculated Jack warmly.

Dollikins alone seemed unmoved.

Her struggle had ended when the fragments of the will were tossing in the white surf.

"Look here," said Jack, "if there wasn't any will I should be the owner of everything, eh, Mr. Bradley?" Mr. Bradley nodded, and Jack turned toward Dollikins. "I will sign a paper giving you one half of all, and without looking at the will, we will agree to burn it; fair?"

"That's square as a die," said Uncle John.

"But I wouldn't do it if I didn't think my uncle wanted you to have it," said Jack.

"He didn't want me to have it," said Dollikins quietly; "but I think he thought you ought to come."

They would have talked until midnight, but the five o'clock train must be taken by Mrs. Bradley, who gratefully accepted Jack's offer to allow everything to remain as it was in the house for as many days as they required; and after much bustle and throwing of old shoes by Dollikins, the widow was driven away to the station, her face bright with hope at the idea of being able, at last, to send Dollikins to school, to say nothing of the half-acknowledged thought that Dollikins might have a trifle from Mr. Perkins.

Uncle John drove her to the station, and when he came back to take Marianna and Dollikins to the hotel, where his wife intended to stay a few days longer, he seemed possessed by the spirit of chuckle.

He came into the house and sat down, looking from one sister to the other, and laughing a low, triumphant laugh, yet withal a laugh so contagious that his nieces soon found themselves joining, although they knew not why.

When they begged to know what was the matter, he seemed to make a herculean effort to speak, but it was some time before he could whisper: "Caught in her own trap. When she gets to the city, Clark will meet her" — each word came out with a chuckle — "and take her straight to my house. Ha, ha, ha! straight to my house. Clark hasn't any house; he's my book-keeper; he has been on the lookout for me for a month to find a first-class housekeeper. Ha, ha, ha! You see if she would go and be Clark's housekeeper she can't refuse to be mine. He liked her letter, and when he showed it to me, I declared she was made for the position. Clark doesn't know who she is, and she doesn't know Clark."

"Then you haven't lost your money," exclaimed Dollikins, "and you won't want me!"

"I have lost a good part of it; that is why I do want you all — want you to teach your Aunt Maria economy. Your mother will find that she earns her money if Clark hires her," and he began chuckling again.

"Are you really poor?" asked Marianna, with a degree

of sadness. "I am afraid you could not afford all you did for me."

"Everything is by comparison, my little Mary Ann; compared to what I was when you first came to us, I am poor now, but I have only to recall Dolly's description of being poor, and I feel pretty comfortable. There will be more of us, and the house will be smaller instead of larger, but with our new housekeeper to manage, I feel considerable confidence in the future," and they all laughed as they had never laughed before.

Jack heard them, where he stood holding the great gray horse that was pawing the ground as if impatient to get them all away from the little, half-painted house, and he said, "May they laugh like that forever; for if they ain't as honest as they are merry, my name ain't Jack Barker. Land o' Liberty! as Uncle Perkins would say, I like them! If I had had such folks, I wouldn't be like I am now. I suppose I was set sailing on a Friday."

He was interrupted in his soliloquy by a light pressure on his arm, and, turning, he saw Dollikins.

"I was going away without giving you your twenty dollars," she said, holding a small box toward him; "I didn't think of anything but Mr. Perkins the other day when you came."

He saw that she had written "Sailors' Bank," upon the box.

"Keep it," he said, "keep it to remember the old place, unless sometime you see a poor fellow that needs it, then give it to him."

"No; you better give it to your wife, because if you should want it, it would be way up to the city. And I wanted to ask you to be sure and not forget to feed old Adam; if you are not going to stay here, I don't see who will take care of him."

"I shall come here every day."

"And do you think your wife would be willing to have Maria round? She does scratch in the garden, and is an awful plague, but it's very hard to kill a hen that you've named. Never name anything that you've got to kill, Mr. Barker. I must say good-by to old Adam."

When she returned, she said, "I think he really looks quite fat now, but he has had to work so hard! I gave him some corn just for a good-by. Do you remember when you gave him the meal, how frightened Mr. Perkins was? He was a miser then. How glad I am the front of the house, any way, was painted before the funeral. Everybody knew that he wasn't stingy by that, didn't they?"

"If he didn't die a miser, it was all owing to you, Miss Dollikins."

"No," she said firmly, "he was not a miser when he died. Of course he was not quite like you and me," she went on, her honesty overcoming her good will, "but he was not a miser. All those mean little horrid ways that he had before he was sick he outgrew completely. He looked so happy when he thought that you were going to have his things — and think of it, Mr. Barker" — she lowered her voice a bit and touched him lightly upon the arm, while Jack noticed that her eyes grew moist — "not one person has said a good thing about him since he died. What is the use for anybody to try to improve?"

"The Lord will bless you, Miss, for all you did for him," said Jack awkwardly.

"Why can't you say something nice about him?" she demanded indignantly.

He was saved the answering by Marianna, who appeared at the door to say that Dollikins must be ready in five minutes.

As soon as she went in doors, Jack continued his interrupted soliloquy: "Yes, I was set sailing on a Friday; but I'll steer the best I can, for I know there'll be a better port, some day. There's some good in Em, or she wouldn't 'a' stood by me when I had nothing; but maybe — who knows! perhaps at the very time she was making way with that will

to take from that little girl only what belonged to her, that same little thing was tearing up her will, so not to take what she thought maybe Heaven didn't want her to have. Now ain't there as much difference in women as there is in ships!"

He grew sad as he saw them come out and lock up the house, and when Dollikins once more put "poor Maria" and "old Adam" in his care, and turned from the black house with tearful eyes, he felt almost as if there had been another funeral. But Mr. Bradley gave him a hint that he must be jolly, for Dollikins's sake, and he managed to send them all off laughing.

He smiled, showing his great white teeth until they had driven away; but he stood for some time, after they were out of sight, watching with earnest eyes the bright horizon into which they seemed to have passed forever.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BID FOR DOLLIKINS.

"IT was strange enough that you should come down to-day, Archibald Laurance!" exclaimed Miss Stacy, as her sister's grandson entered the kitchen where the little old lady was making cake.

"Grandmamma said that you had been writing to her ever since I left here, imploring her to send me back. I have heard nothing but poor Aunt Stacy! dear Aunt Stacy! lonely Aunt Stacy! good Aunt Stacy!" drawled Archie, "and I came down to see how poor — and lonely — and dear — you were."

"But to think that you should have come to-day, the day of all days that I most wanted you, that I most needed you, Archie!"

"That certainly was extremely lucky; and the only way I can explain it is that I must have smelled your spices. Grandmamma has gone to Lake George for a week, and" —

"Archie, is it true that Mr. Bradley has lost his money?" his aunt interrupted.

"Grandpapa says a pretty good slice of it is gone, and there is a murmur on the street that he is going to sell his house and go to live in a house that he owns over amongst the plebs."

"O, Archie! halloo, Archie!"

The voice came from the next room, and Archie laughed and shouted: "Halloo, Poll! good-morning!"

"Scoundrel!" returned the bird.

Miss Stacy closed the door, and the parrot continued to cry, "O, Archie! halloo, Archie! Aunt Stacy! halloo, Aunt Stacy!"

"Help yourself, dear," said the old lady, pushing the raisins and citron toward the boy.

Archie helped himself with a generous hand.

"I have wanted to see you for a week — yes, it must be all of a week since the idea came to me — and I want your advice, Archie."

"If you won't feel that you must return the compliment, I will give you all you want, Aunt."

"A young person is so much better judge of a young person," said Miss Stacy, separating the raisins she had stoned with her long forefinger. "Do you know, Archie dear, sometimes I am very lonely here?"

"I should think you might be. Why don't you shut up the old thing and come to Boston?"

"Leave the old house with nobody in it?" exclaimed Miss Stacy, almost in tears.

"Sell it, then."

"Sell it, Archibald! Sell your great grandfather's home, your grandmother's home — my home!"

"Don't sell it. I was only trying to make you comfortable. On the whole, I wouldn't sell it."

"Of course you wouldn't, Archie."

"Any advice I give that you don't like you can hand right back, you know, only don't look so disconsolate."

"But I am often lonely here, Archie," she repeated, watching him closely.

He munched his raisins, and offered no comment.

"Yes, I am very lonely," she continued, "and I have a project which may seem to others a very wild scheme."

"My hair is on end," he said, cutting a thick piece of citron.

"Mary Jane is out in the barn," she said softly.

"You don't propose to kill her, there, do you?" he returned in a whisper.

"I don't want her to hear anything about this."

"Oh! that's all. Good enough. Glad we haven't got to make way with Mary Jane."

"Archie, why do you talk such nonsense? I meant that Mary Jane has a very jealous disposition."

"Turn her off and get another girl."

"I couldn't do it. She has lived in this house twenty-one years day after to-morrow."

"Can't you stand it a little longer? She will soon die of old age."

"Archie, Mary Jane is very young yet."

"Hang Mary Jane! What do you want me to say about her?"

"Nothing, Archie, nothing at all; it is not about Mary Jane, but her disposition that I am speaking."

"I always thought that I liked Mary Jane's cooking; it's her disposition that we don't like," he whispered again mysteriously.

"She is jealous, Archie, jealous. She would not like to have another girl in the house."

"Do you want another girl?"

"Not a hired girl, Archie, not a servant, but a young companion."

"It might make it a little more cheerful here," he admitted.

"This is what I want to talk to you about, and ask your advice, Archie dear. I know that you will be surprised when I mention the person I have in mind."

"Perhaps I shall be," he observed coolly.

"Archie, it is Dollikins Bradley! That is why I asked so many questions about her when you were here last."

Archie's smile was very broad.

"Now what does that mean?" cried his aunt. "That you think it a very funny project?"

"And you want my advice about it?" he asked, avoiding the last question.

"Yes; tell me just what you think of her; exactly what you think of her. You know that you have seen her by herself — away from the restraint of older people."

"Wouldn't she be rather lively for this place?"

"But, my dear, I am not opposed to life and spirits."

"Not at all; but old Christopher is. He wouldn't last a month if she got hold of him."

"I don't care for that," she went on recklessly. "I have been thinking of buying another horse — a younger horse — Archie; everybody is laughing about Christopher since Mr. Perkins's horse beat him. I don't see why you let him beat him — and then told of it."

"You get a new horse, and I will make that all right," said Archie, with a conciliatory smile. "Of course, if you get a new horse you will get a new buggy. A nag with any spirit in him might kick that old shay to pieces."

"I haven't said anything about taking Dollikins to your grandmother, Archie; but about ten years ago — let me see, was it ten years ago? Yes, it was just ten years ago — she wanted me to have a companion. My friend, Fanny Johnson, came to stay awhile with me, and your grandmother wanted her to live here always; but Fanny wasn't at all as she used to be. She had lost her husband, and she was very gloomy. I was sorry for her, of course, but I never knew her husband, and she was so very gloomy, Archie."

"But don't you think it would be better to try for somebody between Fanny Johnson and Dollikins Bradley?" suggested Archie.

"Dollikins is young, and a bit of a tomboy now, I will admit," she said mildly, "but I could mold her into what I wanted, perhaps, and I couldn't do anything at all with Fanny. She was set in her gloomy ways, which was very proper, I know, but she never wanted to go anywhere, or do anything. I would rather have Dollikins than Marianna, although Marianna makes such beautiful caps, and is so ladylike. Dollikins

"No; she left this house a month ago."

"Is Miss Dollikins here?"

"They have all gone to Boston. I thought you lived in Boston?"

"I do, but quite often people get in and out of the city and I don't know it."

"I thought you knew everything." Jack's tone was exasperating.

"Almost everything," said Archie solemnly.

"Do you know whether Dollikins is going to live with her uncle?"

"Too bad you should have asked that, it is the one thing that I don't know. It quite mortifies me."

"Yes; that was hard luck," said Jack, who was beginning to like the boy for his good nature. "They got Mary Anne away, though. Do you ever see her?"

"Sometimes; I don't care much for girls."

"Now I should say that you did, just to look at you. Why, you are almost as pretty as a girl yourself."

"I am considered prettier than most girls," said Archie coolly.

"Well, if you ain't a jackanapes my name ain't Barker."

Archie laughed, not in the least offended, and said, "I

expected to find the Bradleys here by this time. I have rather an important message for Miss Dollikins, and as Aunt Stacy wanted to take a drive, why, I feel obliged to hurry a little."

"Is the message a telegram?" Jack inquired.

"No."

"A message from her uncle, maybe? I know it's from her uncle," he thought, as Archie made no reply nor seemed to notice the serious expression on the sailor's brown face. "Of course it is! He won't let her divide — he knows well enough that the whole thing is hers by law. If she comes and gets the message she won't divide. But she deserves it and I don't. I was his own blood, and I was willing that he should have died as he had lived — a miser! But she" —

Archie broke in upon his thoughts with, "What's the matter? There they come!" and the Bradley carriage appeared, driven at almost break-neck speed by Dollikins, who sat beside the imposing driver.

"Don't you touch the reins when we turn in," she said imperatively. "Uncle John told you to let me alone, no matter if I tipped the whole thing over!"

"There's Miss Marianna to be thought of, Miss Dollikins," said the coachman reproachfully.

"When you see Miss Bradley just ready to turn a somersault through the window, you can grab the reins; not before."

Marianna was willing to run great risks in her delight at seeing Dollikins in such spirits. Poor little Doll, who had had so little in life!

"Want to race?" cried Dollikins, drawing in the horses beside the Stacy "shay."

"Yes," said Archie, going up to the carriage, "I want to race you into the house before Aunt Stacy gets here. I want to tell you something."

They greeted Jack warmly, and his confidence in Dollikins returned when she asked if Bob Weston had come.

"You must see me first," said Archie.

"O, dear, dear!" exclaimed Dollikins, when she entered the parlor where the Bradley urn seemed still to rebuke her levity, "only a month away, and it seems as if we had never lived here! Marianna, you are very remarkable; nothing in the world changes you. Think how much longer you were away than I have been, and I am sure I could never come back here now."

"Has your uncle adopted you, too?" asked Archie.

"No, sir; he has not. I am not offered, at present, to any one to adopt."

"Allow me to congratulate you; where are you going to live, if I may ask?"

"I am going to have a little hand-organ, and a tin cup, and sit at the head of your street; and every time you go into the street, or out of it, and don't drop at least ten cents into my cup, I shall holler out, 'Halloo, Lord Archie!'"

"If that is so, Aunt Stacy is sure to get you, and I shall lose a big loaf of fruit cake."

"How so?"

"She told me if your uncle hadn't taken you she would give me a loaf of fruit cake — and I should cut the citron for it if she did not get you. She ordered out the old shay and was coming over here to adopt you, but she went back to lock up the silver, and I drove off."

"What will she do," asked Marianna, laughing, "when she comes out and finds no shay?"

"She will go back and wait till I return. I have done it before, but not for a good many years."

"I hope you are rude enough," said Dollikins.

"Yes, thank you, almost everybody is; but if Aunt Stacy comes and offers to take you — why, don't you go, my wild gazelle."

"Is that slang?" inquired Dollikins.

"No, that is poetry; but if it had been addressed to Aunt Stacy, or my grandmother, it would have been slang."

"I am so glad to know the difference," said Dollikins. "Marianna is quite disgusted with the boys and girls on your street; she says the fishermen here would be ashamed to use some of the expressions she has heard in houses — not a mile from yours."

"It's sad, Miss Dollikins, but what can I do? one feller can't reform a whole street."

"Couldn't you reform one 'feller'?" suggested Marianna. "If each one would do just that why wouldn't it come out all right?"

"Perhaps we will start a Reform Club if Miss Dollikins doesn't go to live with that dear great-aunt of mine — and don't you forget — I mean, just remember," he said, turning to Dollikins, "that you don't want to go there for more than a short vacation."

"But I should like her fruit cake," admitted Dollikins frankly.

"Yes; but you won't like to read lots of chapters in the book of Job on Sundays. I don't like Job. And you will have to take care of the silver — put it under your bed every night; she said so. If a robber comes he will go to your

room. And you'll have to darn the hired man's stockings and mend his clothes."

"And scratch the parrot's head?" inquired Dollikins.

"Certainly," said Archie, seriously.

"Wouldn't that be a life!" sighed Marianna.

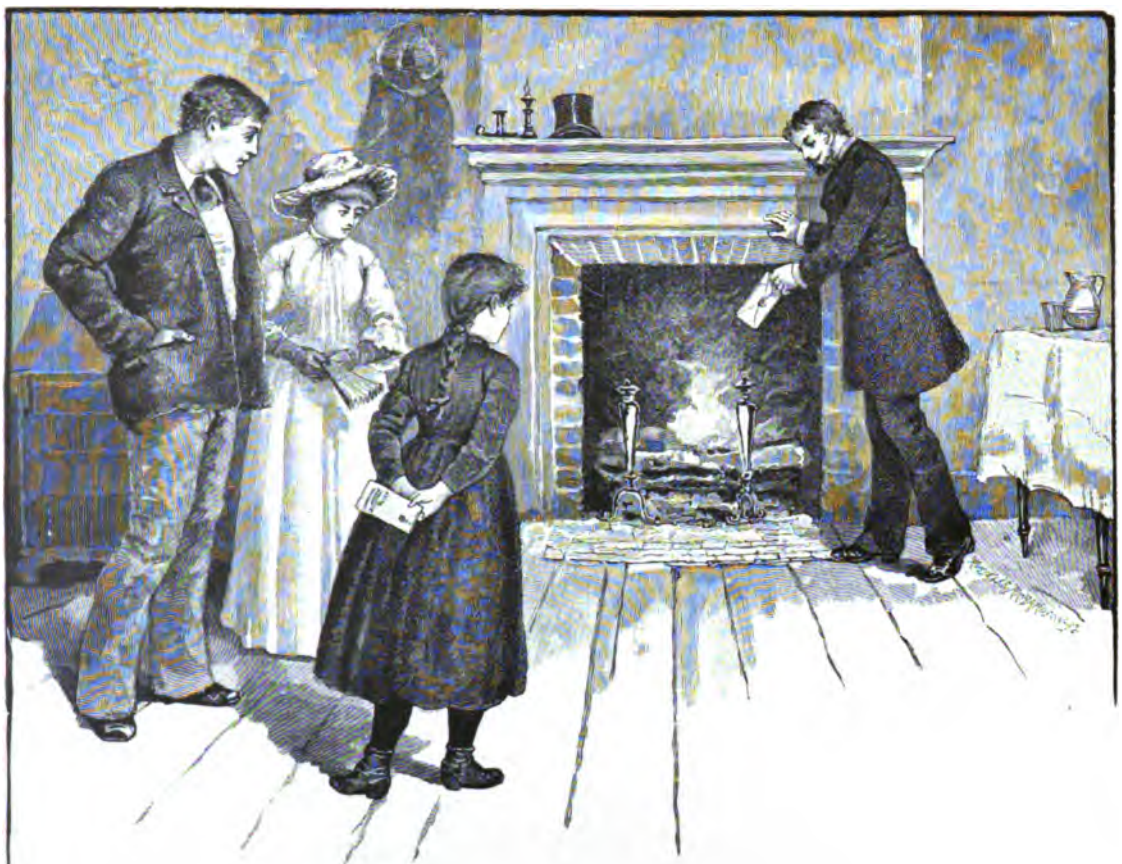
"You won't have to go if you don't want to, I suppose," said Archie, "and just bear in mind that you don't want to go."

"You can't really mean that Miss Stacy wants me to live with her!" cried Dollikins.

"What do you suppose I stole the shay for?" he asked calmly. "I thought I would just murmur in your ear about Job, and taking care of the silver, and washing the dishes, before the old lady got here. No charge. Good-morning." He bowed gracefully, and went out.

Dollikins followed, and would have seen him safely into the shay, but at the door she met her uncle and the lawyer. She cried, "Thank you, Archie, a hundred times!" He raised his round cap from his blonde pate, took up the reins, and drove leisurely away.

"Here is the paper I promised you," whispered Jack as they entered the miser's rooms. "It gives you one half of every thing my uncle left."



IN AN INSTANT THE CONSUMING FLAME SHOT UP ANEW, FED BY THE LAST WILL OF MR. PERKINS.

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When he saw the look of understanding which passed between the young lawyer and Dollikins, he said hastily, "You have seen the will, Miss Dollikins."

"I have not," she said gently. Her lips lost their bright color as the lawyer took the last will of Mr. Perkins from his pocket, and drew near the fire.

"I am sure I am doing right," she said to herself, "but it seems very solemn."

The lawyer, thinking her emotion might be caused by a feeling of regret, said lightly, "This is hardly a legal proceeding, and it is not too late for us to change our minds, Miss Dollikins."

"I have told you all, Bob," she said earnestly, "and I shall be happier not to know, and so will Mr. Barker. You said there would be nobody but us to make a fuss about it — now do it, please, quickly, and have it over."

In an instant the consuming flame shot up anew, fed by the last will of Mr. Perkins. The last will! the contents of which they were never to know.

"You have made a fire, Jack, big enough to burn the records of the world," said the lawyer.

"I didn't want this thing to miss fire," said Jack, laughing.

As the yellow flame ascended, Dollikins drew near, and in

a moment she had added her paper to the sacrifice, and nothing remained to entitle her to a cent's worth of the old man's possessions.

"Foolish girl!" exclaimed the young lawyer.

"No," said her uncle, "she has done what she believed was right."

For a time Jack seemed somewhat dazed; but when he recovered he insisted upon Dollikins taking one thousand dollars, and Perkins's Island.

"So I can look in the glass without blushing," he said; "and so I need not feel that Uncle Perkins died an ungrateful miser."

"I would advise you to take that to save Mr. Barker from being haunted," said the lawyer, "for Mr. Perkins would never have had it less, I assure you. I came here thinking the property would be equally divided."

"He did not say so," said Dollikins firmly, but she agreed to take what Jack had last offered as a present from the old man she had once taken for her mission.

While they were talking, Marianna stole out of the house with some rare flowers she had brought from the city, and placed them tenderly upon the new-made grave in the churchyard.

She believed she had spoken unjustly of him who slept beneath. Perhaps there was only a poetic justice in her act, but better that than none.

At the same moment Archie drove up to the old Stacy homestead and his aunt met him at the door.

"I am afraid we shall be late," she said, with gentle reproach; "where have you been?"

"I went over to Miss Dollikins."

"Why, what for, Archie, without me!"

"I don't think you would have hooked her, Aunt Stacy, if I hadn't been deceptive."

"Hooked her!" repeated the old lady, with slowly rising displeasure.

"She would have been too lively a fish for you to land, Auntie, even if I hadn't gone ahead and stirred up the water."

"Archie, will you please to talk so I can comprehend you?"

"I'll try; she is going to have a hand-organ and a tin cup and sit at the corner of our street. She would rather do it than to live with Mary Jane."

"Archie, why did you mention Mary Jane? You have spoilt all! I could have arranged everything. Oh! I am disappointed — I am disappointed!"

"I didn't mention Mary Jane, I only mentioned Job and the silver, and she preferred the hand-organ."

"I suppose that you thought that you could do better than I could, Archie. I do not blame you, but you have ruined all my plans. My heart was quite set upon her. I would have made something of her."

"She would not have come, any way," said Archie, leaning out of the shay to get a full view of his aunt; "she wouldn't, honor bright; she's going away to school. Marianna told me so."

She did not wait to reply, but with tears in her eyes went into the house.

As Archie turned old Christopher toward the stable, he said to himself, "There's always two feelings for a feller to enjoy; feeling mean, or feeling meaner. You had your choice, little Archie. It would have been fun to have Dollikins here. To see Aunt Stacy bawl because she didn't come makes me feel mean — but to help Aunt Stacy to get her here would make me feel meaner. Git up, Christopher! In all probability that colt I was telling you about won't come on to the place now. You'll be lively enough for Fanny Johnson. Git up!"

The gossips, as might be expected, had much to say. But

they are people who cannot bear much mental strain, and Nature has kindly formed them so their tongues may act as safety-valves, when their astonishment, or curiosity, becomes so great that there is danger of an explosion.

Let them talk; but whatever they may say, believe me, this is the true story of Dollikins and the Miser.

APR 24 1935